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RUDYARD KIPLING

A DIVERSITY OF CREATURES

LETTERS OF TRAVEL
1892—1913

BY

RUDYARD KIPLING

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A DIVERSITY OF CREATURES

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PREFACE

With two exceptions, the dates at the head of these stories show when they were published in magazine form. 'The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat,' and 'My Son's Wife' carry the dates when they were written.

RUDYARD KIPLING.

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A DIVERSITY OF CREATURES

AS EASY AS A. B. C.

(1912)

The A.B.C., that semi-elected, semi-nominated body of a few score persons, controls the Planet. Transportation is Civilisation, our motto runs. Theoretically we do what we please, so long as we do not interfere with the traffic and all it implies. *Practically, the A.B.C. confirms or annuls all international arrangements, and, to judge from its last report, finds our tolerant, humorous, lazy little Planet only too ready to shift the whole burden of public administration on its shoulders.*

'With the Night Mail.'[1]

ISN'T it almost time that our Planet took some interest in the proceedings of the Aerial Board of Control? One knows that easy communications nowadays, and lack of privacy in the past, have killed all curiosity among mankind, but as the Board's Official Reporter I am bound to tell my tale.

At 9.30 A.M., August 26, A.D. 2065, the Board, sitting in London, was informed by De Forest that the District of Northern Illinois had riotously cut itself out of all systems and would remain disconnected till the Board should take over and administer it direct.

[1]Actions and Reactions.

Every Northern Illinois freight and passenger tower was, he reported, out of action; all District main, local, and guiding lights had been extinguished; all General Communications were dumb, and through traffic had been diverted. No reason had been given, but he gathered unofficially from the Mayor of Chicago that the District complained of 'crowd-making and invasion of privacy.'

As a matter of fact, it is of no importance whether Northern Illinois stay in or out of planetary circuit; as a matter of policy, any complaint of invasion of privacy needs immediate investigation, lest worse follow.

By 9.45 A.M. De Forest, Dragomiroff (Russia), Takahira (Japan), and Pirolo (Italy) were empowered to visit Illinois and 'to take such steps as might be necessary for the resumption of traffic and *all that that implies*.' By 10 A.M. the Hall was empty, and the four Members and I were aboard what Pirolo insisted on calling 'my leetle godchild'—that is to say, the new *Victor Pirolo*. Our Planet prefers to know Victor Pirolo as a gentle, grey-haired enthusiast who spends his time near Foggia, inventing or creating new breeds of Spanish-Italian olive-trees; but there is another side to his nature—the manufacture of quaint inventions, of which the *Victor Pirolo* is, perhaps, not the least surprising. She and a few score sister-craft of the same type embody his latest ideas. But she is not comfortable. An A.B.C. boat does not take the air with the level-keeled lift of a liner, but shoots up rocket-fashion like the 'aeroplane' of our ancestors, and makes her height at top-speed from the first. That is why I found myself sitting suddenly on the large lap of Eustace Arnott, who commands the A.B.C. Fleet. One knows

vaguely that there is such a thing as a Fleet somewhere on the Planet, and that, theoretically, it exists for the purposes of what used to be known as 'war.' Only a week before, while visiting a glacier sanatorium behind Gothaven, I had seen some squadrons making false auroras far to the north while they manœuvred round the Pole; but, naturally, it had never occurred to me that the things could be used in earnest.

Said Arnott to De Forest as I staggered to a seat on the chart-room divan: 'We're tremendously grateful to 'em in Illinois. We've never had a chance of exercising all the Fleet together. I've turned in a General Call, and I expect we'll have at least two hundred keels aloft this evening.'

'Well aloft?' De Forest asked.

'Of course, sir. Out of sight till they're called for.'

Arnott laughed as he lolled over the transparent chart-table where the map of the summer-blue Atlantic slid along, degree by degree, in exact answer to our progress. Our dial already showed 320 m.p.h. and we were two thousand feet above the uppermost traffic lines.

'Now, where is this Illinois District of yours?' said Dragomiroff. 'One travels so much, one sees so little. Oh, I remember! It is in North America.'

De Forest, whose business it is to know the out districts, told us that it lay at the foot of Lake Michigan, on a road to nowhere in particular, was about half an hour's run from end to end, and, except in one corner, as flat as the sea. Like most flat countries nowadays, it was heavily guarded against invasion of privacy by forced timber—fifty-foot spruce and tamarack, grown in five years. The population was close on two millions,

largely migratory between Florida and California, with a backbone of small farms (they call a thousand acres a farm in Illinois) whose owners come into Chicago for amusements and society during the winter. They were, he said, noticeably kind, quiet folk, but a little exacting, as all flat countries must be, in their notions of privacy. There had, for instance, been no printed news-sheet in Illinois for twenty-seven years. Chicago argued that engines for printed news sooner or later developed into engines for invasion of privacy, which in turn might bring the old terror of Crowds and blackmail back to the Planet. So news-sheets were not.

'And that's Illinois,' De Forest concluded. 'You see, in the Old Days, she was in the fore-front of what they used to call "progress," and Chicago——'

'Chicago?' said Takahira. 'That's the little place where there is Salati's Statue of the Nigger in Flames? A fine bit of old work.'

'When did you see it?' asked De Forest quickly. 'They only unveil it once a year.'

'I know. At Thanksgiving. It was then,' said Takahira, with a shudder. 'And they sang MacDonough's Song, too.'

'Whew!' De Forest whistled. 'I did not know that! I wish you'd told me before. MacDonough's Song may have had its uses when it was composed, but it was an infernal legacy for any man to leave behind.'

'It's protective instinct, my dear fellows,' said Pirolo, rolling a cigarette. 'The Planet, she has had her dose of popular government. She suffers from inherited agoraphobia. She has no—ah—use for crowds.'

Dragomiroff leaned forward to give him a light. 'Certainly,' said the white-bearded Russian, 'the Planet

has taken all precautions against crowds for the past hundred years. What is our total population to-day? Six hundred million, we hope; five hundred, we think; but—but if next year's census shows more than four hundred and fifty, I myself will eat all the extra little babies. We have cut the birth-rate out—right out! For a long time we have said to Almighty God, "Thank You, Sir, but we do not much like Your game of life, so we will not play."'

'Anyhow,' said Arnott defiantly, 'men live a century apiece on the average now.'

'Oh, that is quite well! I am rich—you are rich—we are all rich and happy because we are so few and we live so long. Only *I* think Almighty God He will remember what the Planet was like in the time of Crowds and the Plague. Perhaps He will send us nerves. Eh, Pirolo?'

The Italian blinked into space. 'Perhaps,' he said, 'He has sent them already. Anyhow, you cannot argue with the Planet. She does not forget the Old Days, and —what can you do?'

'For sure we can't remake the world.' De Forest glanced at the map flowing smoothly across the table from west to east. 'We ought to be over our ground by nine to-night. There won't be much sleep afterwards.'

On which hint we dispersed, and I slept till Takahira waked me for dinner. Our ancestors thought nine hours' sleep ample for their little lives. We, living thirty years longer, feel ourselves defrauded with less than eleven out of the twenty-four.

By ten o'clock we were over Lake Michigan. The west shore was lightless, except for a dull ground-glare

at Chicago, and a single traffic-directing light—its leading beam pointing north—at Waukegan on our starboard bow. None of the Lake villages gave any sign of life; and inland, westward, so far as we could see, blackness lay unbroken on the level earth. We swooped down and skimmed low across the dark, throwing calls county by county. Now and again we picked up the faint glimmer of a house-light, or heard the rasp and rend of a cultivator being played across the fields, but Northern Illinois as a whole was one inky, apparently uninhabited, waste of high, forced woods. Only our illuminated map, with its little pointer switching from county to county, as we wheeled and twisted, gave us any idea of our position. Our calls, urgent, pleading, coaxing or commanding, through the General Communicator brought no answer. Illinois strictly maintained her own privacy in the timber which she grew for that purpose.

'Oh, this is absurd!' said De Forest. 'We're like an owl trying to work a wheat-field. Is this Bureau Creek? Let's land, Arnott, and get hold of some one.'

We brushed over a belt of forced woodland—fifteen-year-old maple sixty feet high—grounded on a private meadow-dock, none too big, where we moored to our own grapnels, and hurried out through the warm dark night towards a light in a verandah. As we neared the garden gate I could have sworn we had stepped knee deep in quicksand, for we could scarcely drag our feet against the prickling currents that clogged them. After five paces we stopped, wiping our foreheads, as hopelessly stuck on dry smooth turf as so many cows in a bog.

'Pest!' cried Pirolo angrily. 'We are ground-

circuited. And it is my own system of ground-circuits too! I know the pull.'

'Good evening,' said a girl's voice from the verandah. 'Oh, I'm sorry! We've locked up. Wait a minute.'

We heard the click of a switch, and almost fell forward as the currents round our knees were withdrawn.

The girl laughed, and laid aside her knitting. An old-fashioned Controller stood at her elbow, which she reversed from time to time, and we could hear the snort and clank of the obedient cultivator half a mile away behind the guardian woods.

'Come in and sit down,' she said. 'I'm only playing a plough. Dad's gone to Chicago to—Ah! Then it was *your* call I heard just now!'

She had caught sight of Arnott's Board uniform, leaped to the switch, and turned it full on.

We were checked, gasping, waist-deep in current this time, three yards from the verandah.

'We only want to know what's the matter with Illinois,' said De Forest placidly.

'Then hadn't you better go to Chicago and find out?' she answered. 'There's nothing wrong here. We own ourselves.'

'How can we go anywhere if you won't loose us?' De Forest went on, while Arnott scowled. Admirals of Fleets are still quite human when their dignity is touched.

'Stop a minute—you don't know how funny you look!' She put her hands on her hips and laughed mercilessly.

'Don't worry about that,' said Arnott, and whistled. A voice answered from the *Victor Pirolo* in the meadow.

'Only a single-fuse ground-circuit!' Arnott called. 'Sort it out gently, please.'

We heard the ping of a breaking lamp; a fuse blew out somewhere in the verandah roof, frightening a nest full of birds. The ground-circuit was open. We stooped and rubbed our tingling ankles.

'How rude—how very rude of you!' the maiden cried.

''Sorry, but we haven't time to look funny,' said Arnott. 'We've got to go to Chicago; and if I were you, young lady, I'd go into the cellars for the next two hours, and take mother with me.'

Off he strode, with us at his heels, muttering indignantly, till the humour of the thing struck and doubled him up with laughter at the foot of the gangway ladder.

'The Board hasn't shown what you might call a fat spark on this occasion,' said De Forest, wiping his eyes. 'I hope I didn't look as big a fool as you did, Arnott! Hullo! What on earth is that? Dad coming home from Chicago?'

There was a rattle and a rush, and a five-plough cultivator, blades in air like so many teeth, trundled itself at us round the edge of the timber, fuming and sparking furiously.

'Jump!' said Arnott, as we bundled ourselves through the none-too-wide door. 'Never mind about shutting it. Up!'

The *Victor Pirolo* lifted like a bubble, and the vicious machine shot just underneath us, clawing high as it passed.

'There's a nice little spit-kitten for you!' said Arnott, dusting his knees. 'We ask her a civil question. First she circuits us and then she plays a cultivator at us!'

'And then we fly,' said Dragomiroff. 'If I were forty years more young, I would go back and kiss her. Ho! Ho!'

'I,' said Pirolo, 'would smack her! My pet ship has been chased by a dirty plough; a—how do you say?—agricultural implement.'

'Oh, that is Illinois all over,' said De Forest. 'They don't content themselves with talking about privacy. They arrange to have it. And now, where's your alleged fleet, Arnott? We must assert ourselves against this wench.'

Arnott pointed to the black heavens.

'Waiting on—up there,' said he. 'Shall I give them the whole installation, sir?'

'Oh, I don't think the young lady is quite worth that,' said De Forest. 'Get over Chicago, and perhaps we'll see something.'

In a few minutes we were hanging at two thousand feet over an oblong block of incandescence in the centre of the little town.

'That looks like the old City Hall. Yes, there's Salati's Statue in front of it,' said Takahira. 'But what on earth are they doing to the place? I thought they used it for a market nowadays! Drop a little, please.'

We could hear the sputter and crackle of road-surfacing machines—the cheap Western type which fuse stone and rubbish into lava-like ribbed glass for their rough country roads. Three or four surfacers worked on each side of a square of ruins. The brick and stone wreckage crumbled, slid forward, and presently spread out into white-hot pools of sticky slag, which the levelling-rods smoothed more or less flat. Already a third of the big block had been so treated, and was cooling to dull red before our astonished eyes.

'It is the Old Market,' said De Forest. 'Well, there's

nothing to prevent Illinois from making a road through a market. It doesn't interfere with traffic, that I can see.'

'Hsh!' said Arnott, gripping me by the shoulder. 'Listen! They're singing. Why on the earth are they singing?'

We dropped again till we could see the black fringe of people at the edge of that glowing square.

At first they only roared against the roar of the surfacers and levellers. Then the words came up clearly—the words of the Forbidden Song that all men knew, and none let pass their lips—poor Pat MacDonough's Song, made in the days of the Crowds and the Plague—every silly word of it loaded to sparking-point with the Planet's inherited memories of horror, panic, fear and cruelty. And Chicago—innocent, contented little Chicago—was singing it aloud to the infernal tune that carried riot, pestilence and lunacy round our Planet a few generations ago!

'Once there was The People—Terror gave it birth;
Once there was The People, and it made a hell of earth!'

(Then the stamp and pause):

'Earth arose and crushed it. Listen, oh, ye slain!
Once there was The People—it shall never be again!'

The levellers thrust in savagely against the ruins as the song renewed itself again, again and again, louder than the crash of the melting walls.

De Forest frowned.

'I don't like that,' he said. 'They've broken back

to the Old Days! They'll be killing somebody soon. I think we'd better divert 'em, Arnott.'

'Ay, ay, sir.' Arnott's hand went to his cap, and we heard the hull of the *Victor Pirolo* ring to the command: 'Lamps! Both watches stand by! Lamps! Lamps! Lamps!'

'Keep still!' Takahira whispered to me. 'Blinkers, please, quartermaster.'

'It's all right—all right!' said Pirolo from behind, and to my horror slipped over my head some sort of rubber helmet that locked with a snap. I could feel thick colloid bosses before my eyes, but I stood in absolute darkness.

'To save the sight,' he explained, and pushed me on to the chart-room divan. 'You will see in a minute.'

As he spoke I became aware of a thin thread of almost intolerable light, let down from heaven at an immense distance—one vertical hairsbreadth of frozen lightning.

'Those are our flanking ships,' said Arnott at my elbow. 'That one is over Galena. Look south—that other one's over Keithburg. Vincennes is behind us, and north yonder is Winthrop Woods. The Fleet's in position, sir'—this to De Forest. 'As soon as you give the word.'

'Ah no! No!' cried Dragomiroff at my side. I could feel the old man tremble. 'I do not know all that you can do, but be kind! I ask you to be a little kind to them below! This is horrible—horrible!'

'When a Woman kills a Chicken,
Dynasties and Empires sicken,'

Takahira quoted. 'It is too late to be gentle now.'

'Then take off my helmet! Take off my helmet!' Dragomiroff began hysterically.

Pirolo must have put his arm round him.

'Hush,' he said, 'I am here. It is all right, Ivan, my dear fellow.'

'I'll just send our little girl in Bureau County a warning,' said Arnott. 'She don't deserve it, but we'll allow her a minute or two to take mamma to the cellar.'

In the utter hush that followed the growling spark after Arnott had linked up his Service Communicator with the invisible Fleet, we heard MacDonough's Song from the city beneath us grow fainter as we rose to position. Then I clapped my hand before my mask lenses, for it was as though the floor of Heaven had been riddled and all the inconceivable blaze of suns in the making was poured through the manholes.

'You needn't count,' said Arnott. I had had no thought of such a thing. 'There are two hundred and fifty keels up there, five miles apart. Full power, please, for another twelve seconds.'

The firmament, as far as eye could reach, stood on pillars of white fire. One fell on the glowing square at Chicago, and turned it black.

'Oh! Oh! Oh! Can men be allowed to do such things?' Dragomiroff cried, and fell across our knees.

'Glass of water, please,' said Takahira to a helmeted shape that leaped forward. 'He is a little faint.'

The lights switched off, and the darkness stunned like an avalanche. We could hear Dragomiroff's teeth on the glass edge.

Pirolo was comforting him.

'All right, all ra-ight,' he repeated. 'Come and lie down. Come below and take off your mask. I give

you my word, old friend, it is all right. They are my siege-lights. Little Victor Pirolo's leetle lights. You know *me!* I do not hurt people.'

'Pardon!' Dragomiroff moaned. 'I have never seen Death. I have never seen the Board take action. Shall we go down and burn them alive, or is that already done?'

'Oh, hush,' said Pirolo, and I think he rocked him in his arms.

'Do we repeat, sir?' Arnott asked De Forest.

'Give 'em a minute's break,' De Forest replied. 'They may need it.'

We waited a minute, and then MacDonough's Song, broken but defiant, rose from undefeated Chicago.

'They seem fond of that tune,' said De Forest. 'I should let 'em have it, Arnott.'

'Very good, sir,' said Arnott, and felt his way to the Communicator keys.

No lights broke forth, but the hollow of the skies made herself the mouth for one note that touched the raw fibre of the brain. Men hear such sounds in delirium, advancing like tides from horizons beyond the ruled foreshores of space.

'That's our pitch-pipe,' said Arnott. 'We may be a bit ragged. I've never conducted two hundred and fifty performers before.' He pulled out the couplers, and struck a full chord on the Service Communicators.

The beams of light leaped down again, and danced, solemnly and awfully, a stilt-dance, sweeping thirty or forty miles left and right at each stiff-legged kick, while the darkness delivered itself—there is no scale to measure against that utterance—of the tune to which they kept time. Certain notes—one learnt to expect them

with terror—cut through one's marrow, but, after three minutes, thought and emotion passed in indescribable agony.

We saw, we heard, but I think we were in some sort swooning. The two hundred and fifty beams shifted, re-formed, straddled and split, narrowed, widened, rippled in ribbons, broke into a thousand white-hot parallel lines, melted and revolved in interwoven rings like old-fashioned engine-turning, flung up to the zenith, made as if to descend and renew the torment, halted at the last instant, twizzled insanely round the horizon, and vanished, to bring back for the hundredth time darkness more shattering than their instantly renewed light over all Illinois. Then the tune and lights ceased together, and we heard one single devastating wail that shook all the horizon as a rubbed wet finger shakes the rim of a bowl.

'Ah, that is my new siren,' said Pirolo. 'You can break an iceberg in half, if you find the proper pitch. They will whistle by squadrons now. It is the wind through pierced shutters in the bows.'

I had collapsed beside Dragomiroff, broken and snivelling feebly, because I had been delivered before my time to all the terrors of Judgment Day, and the Archangels of the Resurrection were hailing me naked across the Universe to the sound of the music of the spheres.

Then I saw De Forest smacking Arnott's helmet with his open hand. The wailing died down in a long shriek as a black shadow swooped past us, and returned to her place above the lower clouds.

'I hate to interrupt a specialist when he's enjoying himself,' said De Forest. 'But, as a matter of fact, all

Illinois has been asking us to stop for these last fifteen seconds.'

'What a pity.' Arnott slipped off his mask. 'I wanted you to hear us really hum. Our lower C can lift street-paving.'

'It is Hell—Hell!' cried Dragomiroff, and sobbed aloud.

Arnott looked away as he answered:

'It's a few thousand volts ahead of the old shoot-'em-and-sink-'em game, but I should scarcely call it *that*. What shall I tell the Fleet, sir?'

'Tell 'em we're very pleased and impressed. I don't think they need wait on any longer. There isn't a spark left down there.' De Forest pointed. 'They'll be deaf and blind.'

'Oh, I think not, sir. The demonstration lasted less than ten minutes.'

'Marvellous!' Takahira sighed. 'I should have said it was half a night. Now, shall we go down and pick up the pieces?'

'But first a small drink,' said Pirolo. 'The Board must not arrive weeping at its own works.'

'I am an old fool—an old fool!' Dragomiroff began piteously. 'I did not know what would happen. It is all new to me. We reason with them in Little Russia.'

Chicago North landing-tower was unlighted, and Arnott worked his ship into the clips by her own lights. As soon as these broke out we heard groanings of horror and appeal from many people below.

'All right,' shouted Arnott into the darkness. 'We aren't beginning again!' We descended by the stairs, to find ourselves knee-deep in a grovelling crowd, some crying that they were blind, others beseeching us not

to make any more noises, but the greater part writhing face downward, their hands or their caps before their eyes.

It was Pirolo who came to our rescue. He climbed the side of a surfacing-machine, and there, gesticulating as though they could see, made oration to those afflicted people of Illinois.

'You stchewpids!' he began. 'There is nothing to fuss for. Of course, your eyes will smart and be red to-morrow. You will look as if you and your wives had drunk too much, but in a little while you will see again as well as before. I tell you this, and I—*I* am Pirolo. Victor Pirolo!'

The crowd with one accord shuddered, for many legends attach to Victor Pirolo of Foggia, deep in the secrets of God.

'Pirolo?' An unsteady voice lifted itself. 'Then tell us was there anything except light in those lights of yours just now?'

The question was repeated from every corner of the darkness.

Pirolo laughed.

'No!' he thundered. (Why have small men such large voices?) 'I give you my word and the Board's word that there was nothing except light—just light! You stchewpids! Your birth-rate is too low already as it is. Some day I must invent something to send it up, but send it down—never!'

'Is that true?—We thought—somebody said——'

One could feel the tension relax all round.

'You *too* big fools,' Pirolo cried. 'You could have sent us a call and we would have told you.'

'Send you a call!' a deep voice shouted. 'I wish you had been at our end of the wire.'

'I'm glad I wasn't,' said De Forest. 'It was bad enough from behind the lamps. Never mind! It's over now. Is there any one here I can talk business with? I'm De Forest—for the Board.'

'You might begin with me, for one—I'm Mayor,' the bass voice replied.

A big man rose unsteadily from the street, and staggered towards us where we sat on the broad turf-edging, in front of the garden fences.

'I ought to be the first on my feet. Am I?' said he.

'Yes,' said De Forest, and steadied him as he dropped down beside us.

'Hello, Andy. Is that you?' a voice called.

'Excuse me,' said the Mayor; 'that sounds like my Chief of Police, Bluthner!'

'Bluthner it is; and here's Mulligan and Keefe—on their feet.'

'Bring 'em up please, Blut. We're supposed to be the Four in charge of this hamlet. What we says, goes. And, De Forest, what do you say?'

'Nothing—yet,' De Forest answered, as we made room for the panting, reeling men. '*You*'ve cut out of system. Well?'

'Tell the steward to send down drinks, please,' Arnott whispered to an orderly at his side.

'Good!' said the Mayor, smacking his dry lips. 'Now I suppose we can take it, De Forest, that henceforward the Board will administer us direct?'

'Not if the Board can avoid it,' De Forest laughed. 'The A.B.C. is responsible for the planetary traffic only.'

'*And all that that implies.*' The big Four who ran Chicago chanted their Magna Charta like children at school.

'Well, get on,' said De Forest wearily. 'What is your silly trouble anyway?'

'Too much dam' Democracy,' said the Mayor, laying his hand on De Forest's knee.

'So? I thought Illinois had had her dose of that.'

'She has. That's why. Blut, what did you do with our prisoners last night?'

'Locked' em in the water-tower to prevent the women killing 'em,' the Chief of Police replied. 'I'm too blind to move just yet, but——'

'Arnott, send some of your people, please, and fetch 'em along,' said De Forest.

'They're triple-circuited,' the Mayor called. 'You'll have to blow out three fuses.' He turned to De Forest, his large outline just visible in the paling darkness. 'I hate to throw any more work on the Board. I'm an administrator myself, but we've had a little fuss with our Serviles. What? In a big city there's bound to be a few men and women who can't live without listening to themselves, and who prefer drinking out of pipes they don't own both ends of. They inhabit flats and hotels all the year round. They say it saves 'em trouble. Anyway, it gives 'em more time to make trouble for their neighbours. We call 'em Serviles locally. And they are apt to be tuberculous.'

'Just so!' said the man called Mulligan. 'Transportation is Civilisation. Democracy is Disease. I've proved it by the blood-test, every time.'

'Mulligan's our Health Officer, and a one-idea man,' said the Mayor, laughing. 'But it's true that most Serviles haven't much control. They *will* talk; and when people take to talking as a business, anything may arrive—mayn't it, De Forest?'

'Anything—except the facts of the case,' said De Forest, laughing.

'I'll give you those in a minute,' said the Mayor. 'Our Serviles got to talking—first in their houses and then on the streets, telling men and women how to manage their own affairs. (You can't teach a Servile not to finger his neighbour's soul.) That's invasion of privacy, of course, but in Chicago we'll suffer anything sooner than make crowds. Nobody took much notice, and so I let 'em alone. My fault! I was warned there would be trouble, but there hasn't been a crowd or murder in Illinois for nineteen years.'

'Twenty-two,' said his Chief of Police.

'Likely. Anyway, we'd forgot such things. So, from talking in the houses and on the streets, our Serviles go to calling a meeting at the Old Market yonder.' He nodded across the square where the wrecked buildings heaved up grey in the dawn-glimmer behind the square-cased statue of The Negro in Flames. 'There's nothing to prevent any one calling meetings except that it's against human nature to stand in a crowd, besides being bad for the health. I ought to have known by the way our men and women attended that first meeting that trouble was brewing. There were as many as a thousand in the market-place, touching each other. Touching! Then the Serviles turned in all tongue-switches and talked, and we——'

'What did they talk about?' said Takahira.

'First, how badly things were managed in the city. That pleased us Four—we were on the platform—because we hoped to catch one or two good men for City work. You know how rare executive capacity is. Even if we didn't it's—it's refreshing to find any one

interested enough in our job to damn our eyes. You don't know what it means to work, year in, year out, without a spark of difference with a living soul.'

'Oh, don't we!' said De Forest. 'There are times on the Board when we'd give our positions if any one would kick us out and take hold of things themselves.'

'But they won't,' said the Mayor ruefully. 'I assure you, sir, we Four have done things in Chicago, in the hope of rousing people, that would have discredited Nero. But what do they say? "Very good, Andy. Have it your own way. Anything's better than a crowd. I'll go back to my land." You *can't* do anything with folk who can go where they please, and don't want anything on God's earth except their own way. There isn't a kick or a kicker left on the Planet.'

'Then I suppose that little shed yonder fell down by itself?' said De Forest. We could see the bare and still smoking ruins, and hear the slag-pools crackle as they hardened and set.

'Oh, that's only amusement. 'Tell you later. As I was saying, our Serviles held the meeting, and pretty soon we had to ground-circuit the platform to save 'em from being killed. And that didn't make our people any more pacific.'

'How d'you mean?' I ventured to ask.

'If you've ever been ground-circuited,' said the Mayor, 'you'll know it don't improve any man's temper to be held up straining against nothing. No, sir! Eight or nine hundred folk kept pawing and buzzing like flies in treacle for two hours, while a pack of perfectly safe Serviles invades their mental and spiritual privacy, may be amusing to watch, but they are not pleasant to handle afterwards.'

Pirolo chuckled.

'Our folk own themselves. They were of opinion things were going too far and too fiery. I warned the Serviles; but they're born house-dwellers. Unless a fact hits 'em on the head, they cannot see it. Would you believe me, they went on to talk of what they called "popular government"? They did! They wanted us to go back to the old Voodoo-business of voting with papers and wooden boxes, and word-drunk people and printed formulas, and news-sheets! They said they practised it among themselves about what they'd have to eat in their flats and hotels. Yes, sir! They stood up behind Bluthner's doubled ground-circuits, and they said that, in this present year of grace, *to* self-owning men and women, *on* that very spot! Then they finished, —he lowered his voice cautiously—'by talking about "The People." And then Bluthner he had to sit up all night in charge of the circuits because he couldn't trust his men to keep 'em shut.'

'It was trying 'em too high,' the Chief of Police broke in. 'But we couldn't hold the crowd ground-circuited for ever. I gathered in all the Serviles on charge of crowd-making, and put 'em in the water-tower, and then I let things cut loose. I had to! The District lit like a sparked gas-tank!'

'The news was out over seven degrees of country,' the Mayor continued; 'and when once it's a question of invasion of privacy, good-bye to right and reason in Illinois! They began turning out traffic-lights and locking up landing-towers on Thursday night. Friday, they stopped all traffic and asked for the Board to take over. Then they wanted to clean Chicago off the side of the Lake and rebuild elsewhere—just for a souvenir

of "The People" that the Serviles talked about. I suggested that they should slag the Old Market where the meeting was held, while I turned in a call to you all on the Board. That kept 'em quiet till you came along. And—and now *you* can take hold of the situation.'

''Any chance of their quieting down?' De Forest asked.

'You can try,' said the Mayor.

De Forest raised his voice in the face of the reviving crowd that had edged in towards us. Day was come.

'Don't you think this business can be arranged?' he began. But there was a roar of angry voices:

'We've finished with Crowds! We aren't going back to the Old Days! Take us over! Take the Serviles away! Administer direct or we'll kill 'em! Down with The People!'

An attempt was made to begin MacDonough's Song. It got no further than the first line, for the *Victor Pirolo* sent down a warning drone on one stopped horn. A wrecked side-wall of the Old Market tottered and fell inwards on the slag-pools. None spoke or moved till the last of the dust had settled down again, turning the steel case of Salati's Statue ashy grey.

'You see you'll just *have* to take us over,' the Mayor whispered.

De Forest shrugged his shoulders.

'You talk as if executive capacity could be snatched out of the air like so much horse-power. Can't you manage yourselves on any terms?' he said.

'We can, if you say so. It will only cost those few lives to begin with.'

The Mayor pointed across the square, where Arnott's men guided a stumbling group of ten or twelve men and

women to the lake front and halted them under the Statue.

'Now I think,' said Takahira under his breath, 'there will be trouble.'

The mass in front of us growled like beasts.

At that moment the sun rose clear, and revealed the blinking assembly to itself. As soon as it realised that it was a crowd we saw the shiver of horror and mutual repulsion shoot across it precisely as the steely flaws shot across the lake outside. Nothing was said, and, being half blind, of course it moved slowly. Yet in less than fifteen minutes most of that vast multitude—three thousand at the lowest count—melted away like frost on south eaves. The remnant stretched themselves on the grass, where a crowd feels and looks less like a crowd.

'These mean business,' the Mayor whispered to Takahira. 'There are a goodish few women there who've borne children. I don't like it.'

The morning draught off the lake stirred the trees round us with promise of a hot day; the sun reflected itself dazzlingly on the canister-shaped covering of Salati's Statue; cocks crew in the gardens, and we could hear gate-latches clicking in the distance as people stumblingly resought their homes.

'I'm afraid there won't be any morning deliveries,' said De Forest. 'We rather upset things in the country last night.'

'That makes no odds,' the Mayor returned. 'We're all provisioned for six months. *We* take no chances.'

Nor, when you come to think of it, does any one else. It must be three-quarters of a generation since any house or city faced a food shortage. Yet is there house or

city on the Planet to-day that has not half a year's provisions laid in? We are like the shipwrecked seamen in the old books, who, having once nearly starved to death, ever afterwards hide away bits of food and biscuit. Truly we trust no Crowds, nor system based on Crowds!

De Forest waited till the last footstep had died away. Meantime the prisoners at the base of the Statue shuffled, posed and fidgeted, with the shamelessness of quite little children. None of them were more than six feet high, and many of them were as grey-haired as the ravaged, harassed heads of old pictures. They huddled together in actual touch, while the crowd, spaced at large intervals, looked at them with congested eyes.

Suddenly a man among them began to talk. The Mayor had not in the least exaggerated. It appeared that our Planet lay sunk in slavery beneath the heel of the Aerial Board of Control. The orator urged us to arise in our might, burst our prison doors and break our fetters (all his metaphors, by the way, were of the most mediæval). Next he demanded that every matter of daily life, including most of the physical functions, should be submitted for decision at any time of the week, month, or year to, I gathered, anybody who happened to be passing by or residing within a certain radius, and that everybody should forthwith abandon his concerns to settle the matter, first by crowd-making, next by talking to the crowds made, and lastly by describing crosses on pieces of paper, which rubbish should later be counted with certain mystic ceremonies and oaths. Out of this amazing play, he assured us, would automatically arise a higher, nobler, and kinder

world, based—he demonstrated this with the awful lucidity of the insane—based on the sanctity of the Crowd and the villainy of the single person. In conclusion, he called loudly upon God, to testify to his personal merits and integrity. When the flow ceased, I turned bewildered to Takahira, who was nodding solemnly.

'Quite correct,' said he. 'It is all in the old books. He has left nothing out, not even the war-talk.'

'But I don't see how this stuff can upset a child, much less a district,' I replied.

'Ah, you are too young,' said Dragomiroff. 'For another thing, you are not a mamma. Please look at the mammas.'

Ten or fifteen women who remained had separated themselves from the silent men, and were drawing in towards the prisoners. It reminded one of the stealthy encircling, before the rush in at the quarry, of wolves round musk-oxen in the North. The prisoners saw, and drew together more closely. The Mayor covered his face with his hands for an instant. De Forest, bareheaded, stepped forward between the prisoners and the slowly, stiffly moving line.

'That's all very interesting,' he said to the dry-lipped orator. 'But the point seems that you've been making crowds and invading privacy.'

A woman stepped forward, and would have spoken, but there was a quick assenting murmur from the men, who realised that De Forest was trying to pull the situation down to ground-line.

'Yes! Yes!' they cried. 'We cut out because they made crowds and invaded privacy! Stick to that! Keep on that switch! Lift the Serviles out of this! The Board's in charge! Hsh!'

'Yes, the Board's in charge,' said De Forest. 'I'll take formal evidence of crowd-making if you like, but the Members of the Board can testify to it. Will that do?'

The women had closed in another pace, with hands that clenched and unclenched at their sides.

'Good! Good enough!' the men cried. 'We're content. Only take them away quickly.'

'Come along up!' said De Forest to the captives. 'Breakfast is quite ready.'

It appeared, however, that they did not wish to go. They intended to remain in Chicago and make crowds. They pointed out that De Forest's proposal was gross invasion of privacy.

'My dear fellow,' said Pirolo to the most voluble of the leaders, 'you hurry, or your crowd that can't be wrong will kill you!'

'But that would be murder,' answered the believer in crowds; and there was a roar of laughter from all sides that seemed to show the crisis had broken.

A woman stepped forward from the line of women, laughing, I protest, as merrily as any of the company. One hand, of course, shaded her eyes, the other was at her throat.

'Oh, they needn't be afraid of being killed!' she called.

'Not in the least,' said De Forest. 'But don't you think that, now the Board's in charge, you might go home while we get these people away?'

'I shall be home long before that. It—it has been rather a trying day.'

She stood up to her full height, dwarfing even De Forest's six-foot-eight, and smiled, with eyes closed against the fierce light.

'Yes, rather,' said De Forest. 'I'm afraid you feel the glare a little. We'll have the ship down.'

He motioned to the *Pirolo* to drop between us and the sun, and at the same time to loop-circuit the prisoners, who were a trifle unsteady. We saw them stiffen to the current where they stood. The woman's voice went on, sweet and deep and unshaken:

'I don't suppose you men realise how much this—this sort of thing means to a woman. I've borne three. We women don't want our children given to Crowds. It must be an inherited instinct. Crowds make trouble. They bring back the Old Days. Hate, fear, blackmail, publicity, "The People"—*That! That! That!*' She pointed to the Statue, and the crowd growled once more.

'Yes, if they are allowed to go on,' said De Forest. 'But this little affair——'

'It means so much to us women that this—this little affair should never happen again. Of course, never's a big word, but one feels so strongly that it is important to stop crowds at the very beginning. Those creatures' —she pointed with her left hand at the prisoners swaying like seaweed in a tideway as the circuit pulled them —'those people have friends and wives and children in the city and elsewhere. One doesn't want anything done to *them*, you know. It's terrible to force a human being out of fifty or sixty years of good life. I'm only forty myself. *I* know. But, at the same time, one feels that an example should be made, because no price is too heavy to pay if—if these people and *all that they imply* can be put an end to. Do you quite understand, or would you be kind enough to tell your men to take the casing off the Statue? It's worth looking at.'

'I understand perfectly. But I don't think anybody

here wants to see the Statue on an empty stomach. Excuse me one moment.' De Forest called up to the ship, 'A flying loop ready on the port side, if you please.' Then to the woman he said with some crispness, 'You might leave us a little discretion in the matter.'

'Oh, of course. Thank you for being so patient. I know my arguments are silly, but——' She half turned away and went on in a changed voice, 'Perhaps this will help you to decide.'

She threw out her right arm with a knife in it. Before the blade could be returned to her throat or her bosom it was twitched from her grip, sparked as it flew out of the shadow of the ship above, and fell flashing in the sunshine at the foot of the Statue fifty yards away. The outflung arm was arrested, rigid as a bar for an instant, till the releasing circuit permitted her to bring it slowly to her side. The other women shrank back silent among the men.

Pirolo rubbed his hands, and Takahira nodded.

'That was clever of you, De Forest,' said he.

'What a glorious pose!' Dragomiroff murmured, for the frightened woman was on the edge of tears.

'Why did you stop me? I would have done it!' she cried.

'I have no doubt you would,' said De Forest. 'But we can't waste a life like yours on these people. I hope the arrest didn't sprain your wrist; it's so hard to regulate a flying loop. But I think you are quite right about those persons' women and children. We'll take them all away with us if you promise not to do anything stupid to yourself.'

'I promise—I promise.' She controlled herself with an effort. 'But it is so important to us women. We

know what it means; and I thought if you saw I was in earnest——'

'I saw you were, and you've gained your point. I shall take all your Serviles away with me at once. The Mayor will make lists of their friends and families in the city and the district, and he'll ship them after us this afternoon.'

'Sure,' said the Mayor, rising to his feet. 'Keefe, if you can see, hadn't you better finish levelling off the Old Market? It don't look sightly the way it is now, and we shan't use it for crowds any more.'

'I think you had better wipe out that Statue as well, Mr. Mayor,' said De Forest. 'I don't question its merits as a work of art, but I believe it's a shade morbid.'

'Certainly, sir. Oh, Keefe! Slag the Nigger before you go on to fuse the Market. I'll get to the Communicators and tell the District that the Board is in charge. Are you making any special appointments, sir?'

'None. We haven't men to waste on these backwoods. Carry on as before, but under the Board. Arnott, run your Serviles aboard, please. Ground ship and pass them through the bilge-doors. We'll wait till we've finished with this work of art.'

The prisoners trailed past him, talking fluently, but unable to gesticulate in the drag of the current. Then the surfacers rolled up, two on each side of the Statue. With one accord the spectators looked elsewhere, but there was no need. Keefe turned on full power, and the thing simply melted within its case. All I saw was a surge of white-hot metal pouring over the plinth, a glimpse of Salati's inscription, 'To the Eternal Memory

of the Justice of the People,' ere the stone base itself cracked and powdered into finest lime. The crowd cheered.

'Thank you,' said De Forest; 'but we want our breakfasts, and I expect you do too. Good-bye, Mr. Mayor! Delighted to see you at any time, but I hope I shan't have to, officially, for the next thirty years. Good-bye, madam. Yes. We're all given to nerves nowadays. I suffer from them myself. Good-bye, gentlemen all! You're under the tyrannous heel of the Board from this moment, but if ever you feel like breaking your fetters you've only to let us know. This is no treat to us. Good luck!'

We embarked amid shouts, and did not check our lift till they had dwindled into whispers. Then De Forest flung himself on the chartroom divan and mopped his forehead.

'I don't mind men,' he panted, 'but women are the devil!'

'Still the devil,' said Pirolo cheerfully. 'That one would have suicided.'

'I know it. That was why I signalled for the flying loop to be clapped on her. I owe you an apology for that, Arnott. I hadn't time to catch your eye, and you were busy with our caitiffs. By the way, who actually answered my signal? It was a smart piece of work.'

'Ilroy,' said Arnott; 'but he overloaded the wave. It may be pretty gallery-work to knock a knife out of a lady's hand, but didn't you notice how she rubbed 'em? He scorched her fingers. Slovenly, I call it.'

'Far be it from me to interfere with Fleet discipline, but don't be too hard on the boy. If that woman had killed herself they would have killed every Servile and

everything related to a Servile throughout the district by nightfall.'

'That was what she was playing for,' Takahira said. 'And with our Fleet gone we could have done nothing to hold them.'

'I may be ass enough to walk into a ground-circuit,' said Arnott, 'but I don't dismiss my Fleet till I'm reasonably sure that trouble is over. They're in position still, and I intend to keep 'em there till the Serviles are shipped out of the district. That last little crowd meant murder, my friends.'

'Nerves! All nerves!' said Pirolo. 'You cannot argue with agoraphobia.'

'And it is not as if they had seen much dead—or *is* it?' said Takahira.

'In all my ninety years I have never seen death.' Dragomiroff spoke as one who would excuse himself. 'Perhaps that was why—last night——'

Then it came out as we sat over breakfast, that, with the exception of Arnott and Pirolo, none of us had ever seen a corpse, or knew in what manner the spirit passes.

'We're a nice lot to flap about governing the Planet,' De Forest laughed. 'I confess, now it's all over, that my main fear was I mightn't be able to pull it off without losing a life.'

'I thought of that too,' said Arnott; 'but there's no death reported, and I've inquired everywhere. What are we supposed to do with our passengers? I've fed 'em.'

'We're between two switches,' De Forest drawled. 'If we drop them in any place that isn't under the Board, the natives will make their presence an excuse for cutting out, same as Illinois did, and forcing the

Board to take over. If we drop them in any place under the Board's control they'll be killed as soon as our backs are turned.'

'If you say so,' said Pirolo thoughtfully, 'I can guarantee that they will become extinct in process of time, quite happily. What is their birth-rate now?'

'Go down and ask 'em,' said De Forest.

'I think they might become nervous and tear me to bits,' the philosopher of Foggia replied.

'Not really? Well?'

'Open the bilge-doors,' said Takahira with a downward jerk of the thumb.

'Scarcely—after all the trouble we've taken to save 'em,' said De Forest.

'Try London,' Arnott suggested. 'You could turn Satan himself loose there, and they'd only ask him to dinner.'

'Good man! You've given me an idea. Vincent! Oh, Vincent!' He threw the General Communicator open so that we could all hear, and in a few minutes the chartroom filled with the rich, fruity voice of Leopold Vincent, who has purveyed all London her choicest amusements for the last thirty years. We answered with expectant grins, as though we were actually in the stalls of, say, the Combination on a first night.

'We've picked up something in your line,' De Forest began.

'That's good, dear man. If it's old enough. There's nothing to beat the old things for business purposes. Have you seen *London, Chatham, and Dover* at Earl's Court? No? I thought I missed you there. Immense! I've had the real steam locomotive engines built from the old designs and the iron rails cast specially

by hand. Cloth cushions in the carriages, too! Immense! And paper railway tickets. And Polly Milton.'

'Polly Milton back again!' said Arnott rapturously. 'Book me two stalls for to-morrow night. What's she singing now, bless her?'

'The old songs. Nothing comes up to the old touch. Listen to this, dear men.' Vincent carolled with flourishes:

> Oh, cruel lamps of London,
> If tears your light could drown,
> Your victims' eyes would weep them,
> Oh, lights of London Town!

'Then they weep.'

'You see?' Pirolo waved his hands at us. 'The old world always weeped when it saw crowds together. It did not know why, but it weeped. We know why, but we do not weep, except when we pay to be made to by fat, wicked old Vincent.'

'Old, yourself!' Vincent laughed. 'I'm a public benefactor, I keep the world soft and united.'

'And I'm De Forest of the Board,' said De Forest acidly, 'trying to get a little business done. As I was saying, I've picked up a few people in Chicago.'

'I cut out. Chicago is——'

'Do listen! They're perfectly unique.'

'Do they build houses of baked mudblocks while you wait—eh? That's an old contact.'

'They're an untouched primitive community, with all the old ideas.'

'Sewing-machines and maypole-dances? Cooking on coal-gas stoves, lighting pipes with matches, and driving

horses? Gerolstein tried that last year. An absolute blow-out!'

De Forest plugged him wrathfully, and poured out the story of our doings for the last twenty-four hours on the top-note.

'And they do it *all* in public,' he concluded. 'You can't stop 'em. The more public, the better they are pleased. They'll talk for hours—like you! Now you can come in again!'

'Do you really mean they know how to vote?' said Vincent. 'Can they act it?'

'Act? It's their life to 'em! And you never saw such faces! Scarred like volcanoes. Envy, hatred, and malice in plain sight. Wonderfully flexible voices. They weep, too.'

'Aloud? In public?'

'I guarantee. Not a spark of shame or reticence in the entire installation. It's the chance of your career."

'D'you say you've brought their voting props along —those papers and ballot-box things?'

'No, confound you! I'm not a luggage-lifter. Apply direct to the Mayor of Chicago. He'll forward you everything. Well?'

'Wait a minute. Did Chicago want to kill 'em? That 'ud look well on the Communicators.'

'Yes! They were only rescued with difficulty from a howling mob—if you know what that is.'

'But I don't,' answered the Great Vincent simply.

'Well then, they'll tell you themselves. They can make speeches hours long.'

'How many are there?'

'By the time we ship 'em all over they'll be perhaps

a hundred, counting children. An old world in miniature. Can't you see it?'

'M-yes; but I've got to pay for it if it's a blow-out, dear man.'

'They can sing the old war songs in the streets. They can get word-drunk, and make crowds, and invade privacy in the genuine old-fashioned way; and they'll do the voting trick as often as you ask 'em a question.'

'Too good!' said Vincent.

'You unbelieving Jew! I've got a dozen head aboard here. I'll put you through direct. Sample 'em yourself.'

He lifted the switch and we listened. Our passengers on the lower deck at once, but not less than five at a time, explained themselves to Vincent. They had been taken from the bosom of their families, stripped of their possessions, given food without finger-bowls, and cast into captivity in a noisome dungeon.

'But look here,' said Arnott aghast; 'they're saying what isn't true. My lower deck isn't noisome, and I saw to the finger-bowls myself.'

'My people talk like that sometimes in Little Russia,' said Dragomiroff. 'We reason with them. We never kill. No!'

'But it's not true,' Arnott insisted. 'What can you do with people who don't tell facts? They're mad!'

'Hsh!' said Pirolo, his hand to his ear. 'It is such a little time since all the Planet told lies.'

We heard Vincent silkily sympathetic. Would they, he asked, repeat their assertions in public—before a vast public? Only let Vincent give them a chance, and the Planet, they vowed, should ring with their wrongs. Their aim in life—two women and a man ex-

plained it together—was to reform the world. Oddly enough, this also had been Vincent's life-dream. He offered them an arena in which to explain, and by their living example to raise the Planet to loftier levels. He was eloquent on the moral uplift of a simple, old-world life presented in its entirety to a deboshed civilisation.

Could they—would they—for three months certain, devote themselves under his auspices, as missionaries, to the elevation of mankind at a place called Earl's Court, which he said, with some truth, was one of the intellectual centres of the Planet? They thanked him, and demanded (we could hear his chuckle of delight) time to discuss and to vote on the matter. The vote, solemnly managed by counting heads—one head, one vote—was favourable. His offer, therefore, was accepted, and they moved a vote of thanks to him in two speeches—one by what they called the 'proposer' and the other by the 'seconder.'

Vincent threw over to us, his voice shaking with gratitude:

'I've got 'em! Did you hear those speeches? That's Nature, dear men. Art can't teach *that*. And they voted as easily as lying. I've never had a troupe of natural liars before. Bless you, dear men! Remember, you're on my free lists for ever, anywhere—all of you. Oh, Gerolstein will be sick—sick!'

'Then you think they'll do?' said De Forest.

'Do? The Little Village'll go crazy! I'll knock up a series of old-world plays for 'em. Their voices will make you laugh and cry. My God, dear men, where *do* you suppose they picked up all their misery from, on this sweet earth? I'll have a pageant of the world's beginnings, and Mosenthal shall do the music. I'll——'

'Go and knock up a village for 'em by to-night. We'll meet you at No. 15 West Landing Tower,' said De Forest. 'Remember the rest will be coming along to-morrow.'

'Let 'em all come!' said Vincent. 'You don't know how hard it is nowadays even for me, to find something that really gets under the public's damned iridium-plated hide. But I've got it at last. Good-bye!'

'Well,' said De Forest when we had finished laughing, 'if any one understood corruption in London I might have played off Vincent against Gerolstein, and sold my captives at enormous prices. As it is, I shall have to be their legal adviser to-night when the contracts are signed. And they won't exactly press any commission on me, either.'

'Meantime,' said Takahira, 'we cannot, of course, confine members of Leopold Vincent's last-engaged company. Chairs for the ladies, please, Arnott.'

'Then I go to bed,' said De Forest. 'I can't face any more women!' And he vanished.

When our passengers were released and given another meal (finger-bowls came first this time) they told us what they thought of us and the Board; and, like Vincent, we all marvelled how they had contrived to extract and secrete so much bitter poison and unrest out of the good life God gives us. They raged, they stormed, they palpitated, flushed and exhausted their poor, torn nerves, panted themselves into silence, and renewed the senseless, shameless attacks.

'But can't you understand,' said Pirolo pathetically to a shrieking woman, 'that if we'd left you in Chicago you'd have been killed?'

'No, we shouldn't. You were bound to save us from being murdered.'

'Then we should have had to kill a lot of other people.'

'That doesn't matter. We were preaching the Truth. You can't stop us. We shall go on preaching in London; and *then* you'll see!'

'You can see now.' said Pirolo, and opened a lower shutter.

We were closing on the Little Village, with her three million people spread out at ease inside her ring of girdling Main-Traffic lights—those eight fixed beams at Chatham, Tonbridge, Redhill, Dorking, Woking, St. Albans, Chipping Ongar, and Southend.

Leopold Vincent's new company looked, with small pale faces, at the silence, the size, and the separated houses.

Then some began to weep aloud, shamelessly—always without shame.

MACDONOUGH'S SONG

Whether the State can loose and bind
In Heaven as well as on Earth:
If it be wiser to kill mankind
Before or after the birth—
These are matters of high concern
Where State-kept schoolmen are;
But Holy State (we have lived to learn)
Endeth in Holy War.

Whether The People be led by the Lord,
Or lured by the loudest throat:
If it be quicker to die by the sword
Or cheaper to die by vote—
These are the things we have dealt with once,
(And they will not rise from their grave)
For Holy People, however it runs,
Endeth in wholly Slave.

Whatsoever, for any cause,
Seeketh to take or give,
Power above or beyond the Laws,
Suffer it not to live!

Holy State or Holy King—
Or Holy People's Will—
Have no truck with the senseless thing.
Order the guns and kill!
Saying—after—me:—

Once there was The People—Terror gave it birth:
Once there was The People and it made a Hell of Earth.
Earth arose and crushed it. Listen, O ye slain!
Once there was The People—it shall never be again!

FRIENDLY BROOK

(March, 1914)

THE valley was so choked with fog that one could scarcely see a cow's length across a field. Every blade, twig, bracken-frond, and hoof-print carried water, and the air was filled with the noise of rushing ditches and field-drains, all delivering to the brook below. A week's November rain on water-logged land had gorged her to full flood, and she proclaimed it aloud.

Two men in sackcloth aprons were considering an untrimmed hedge that ran down the hillside and disappeared into mist beside those roarings. They stood back and took stock of the neglected growth, tapped an elbow of hedge-oak here, a mossed beech-stub there, swayed a stooled ash back and forth, and looked at each other.

'I reckon she's about two rod thick,' said Jabez the younger, 'an' she hasn't felt iron since—when has she, Jesse?'

'Call it twenty-five year, Jabez, an' you won't be far out.'

'Umm!' Jabez rubbed his wet handbill on his wetter coat-sleeve. 'She ain't a hedge. She's all manner o' trees. We'll just about have to——' He paused, as professional etiquette required.

'Just about have to side her up an' see what she'll

bear. But hadn't we best——?' Jesse paused in his turn, both men being artists and equals.

'Get some kind o' line to go by.' Jabez ranged up and down till he found a thinner place, and with clean snicks of the handbill revealed the original face of the fence. Jesse took over the dripping stuff as it fell forward, and, with a grasp and a kick, made it to lie orderly on the bank till it should be faggoted.

By noon a length of unclean jungle had turned itself into a cattle-proof barrier, tufted here and there with little plumes of the sacred holly which no woodman touches without orders.

'Now we've a witness-board to go by!' said Jesse at last.

'She won't be as easy as this all along,' Jabez answered. 'She'll need plenty stakes and binders when we come to the brook.'

'Well, ain't we plenty?' Jesse pointed to the ragged perspective ahead of them that plunged downhill into the fog. 'I lay there's a cord an' a half o' firewood, let alone faggots, 'fore we get anywheres anigh the brook.'

'The brook's got up a piece since morning,' said Jabez. 'Sounds like's if she was over Wickenden's door-stones.'

Jesse listened, too. There was a growl in the brook's roar as though she worried something hard.

'Yes. She's over Wickenden's door-stones,' he replied. 'Now she'll flood acrost Alder Bay an' that'll ease her.'

'She won't ease Jim Wickenden's hay none if she do,' Jabez grunted. 'I told Jim he'd set that liddle haystack o' his too low down in the medder. I *told* him so when he was drawin' the bottom for it.'

'I told him so, too,' said Jesse. 'I told him 'fore ever you did. I told him when the County Council tarred the roads up along.' He pointed up-hill, where unseen automobiles and road-engines droned past continually. 'A tarred road, she shoots every drop o' water into a valley same's a slate roof. 'Tisn't as 'twas in the old days, when the waters soaked in and soaked out in the way o' nature. It rooshes off they tarred roads all of a lump, and naturally every drop is bound to descend into the valley. And there's tar roads both two sides this valley for ten miles. That's what I told Jim Wickenden when they tarred the roads last year. But he's a valley-man. He don't hardly ever journey up-hill.'

'What did he say when you told him that?' Jabez demanded, with a little change of voice.

'Why? What did he say to you when *you* told him?' was the answer.

'What he said to you, I reckon, Jesse.'

'Then, you don't need me to say it over again, Jabez.'

'Well, let be how 'twill, what was he gettin' *after* when he said what he said to me?' Jabez insisted.

'*I* dunno; unless you tell me what manner o' words he said to *you*.'

Jabez drew back from the hedge—all hedges are nests of treachery and eavesdropping—and moved to an open cattle-lodge in the centre of the field.

'No need to go ferretin' around,' said Jesse. 'None can't see us here 'fore we see them.'

'What was Jim Wickenden gettin' at when I said he'd set his stack too near anigh the brook?' Jabez dropped his voice. 'He was in his mind.'

'He ain't never been out of it yet to my knowledge,' Jesse drawled, and uncorked his tea-bottle.

'But then Jim says: "I ain't goin' to shift my stack a yard," he says. "The Brook's been good friends to me, and if she be minded," he says, "to take a snatch at my hay, *I* ain't settin' out to withstand her." That's what Jim Wickenden says to me last—last June-end 'twas,' said Jabez.

'Nor he hasn't shifted his stack, neither,' Jesse replied. 'An' if there's more rain, the brook she'll shift it for him.'

'No need tell *me!* But I want to know what Jim was gettin' *at?*'

Jabez opened his clasp-knife very deliberately; Jesse as carefully opened his. They unfolded the newspapers that wrapped their dinners, coiled away and pocketed the string that bound the packages, and sat down on the edge of the lodge manger. The rain began to fall again through the fog, and the brook's voice rose.

. . . . . .

'But I always allowed Mary was his lawful child, like,' said Jabez, after Jesse had spoken for a while.

''Tain't so. . . . Jim Wickenden's woman she never made nothing. She come out o' Lewes with her stockin's round her heels, an' she never made nor mended aught till she died. *He* had to light fire an' get breakfast every mornin' except Sundays, while she sowed it abed. Then she took an' died, sixteen, seventeen, year back; but she never had no childern.'

'They was valley-folk,' said Jabez apologetically. 'I'd no call to go in among 'em, but I always allowed Mary——'

'No. Mary come out o' one o' those Lunnon Chil-

dern Societies. After his woman died, Jim got his mother back from his sister over to Peasmarsh, which she'd gone to house with when Jim married. His mother kept house for Jim after his woman died. They do say 'twas his mother led him on toward adoptin' of Mary—to furnish out the house with a child, like, and to keep him off of gettin' a noo woman. He mostly done what his mother contrived. 'Cardenly, twixt 'em, they asked for a child from one o' those Lunnon societies—same as it might ha' been these Bernardo childern—an' Mary was sent down to 'em, in a candle-box, I've heard.'

'Then Mary is chance-born. I never knowed that,' said Jabez. 'Yet I must ha' heard it some time or other. . . .'

'No. She ain't. 'Twould ha' been better for some folk if she had been. She come to Jim in a candle-box with all the proper papers—lawful child o' some couple in Lunnon somewheres—mother dead, father drinkin'. *And* there was that Lunnon society's five shillin's a week for her. Jim's mother she wouldn't despise week-end money, but I never heard Jim was much of a muck-grubber. Let be how 'twill, they two mothered up Mary no bounds, till it looked at last like they'd forgot she wasn't their own flesh an' blood. Yes, I reckon they forgot Mary wasn't their'n by rights.'

'That's no new thing,' said Jabez. 'There's more'n one or two in this parish wouldn't surrender back their Bernarders. You ask Mark Copley an' his woman an' that Bernarder cripple-babe o' theirs.'

'Maybe they need the five shillin',' Jesse suggested.

'It's handy,' said Jabez. 'But the child's more. "Dada" he says, an' "Mumma" he says, with his great

rollin' head-piece all hurdled up in that iron collar. *He* won't live long—his backbone's rotten, like. But they Copleys do just about set store by him—five bob or no five bob.'

'Same way with Jim an' his mother,' Jesse went on. 'There was talk betwixt 'em after a few years o' not takin' any more week-end money for Mary; but let alone *she* never passed a farden in the mire 'thout longin's, Jim didn't care, like, to push himself forward into the Society's remembrance. So naun came of it. The week-end money would ha' made no odds to Jim—not after his uncle willed him they four cottages at Eastbourne *an'* money in the bank.'

'That was true, too, then? I heard something in a scadderin' word-o'-mouth way,' said Jabez.

'I'll answer for the house property, because Jim he requested my signed name at the foot o' some papers concernin' it. Regardin' the money in the bank, he nature-ally wouldn't like such things talked about all round the parish, so he took strangers for witnesses.'

'Then 'twill make Mary worth seekin' after?'

'She'll need it. Her Maker ain't done much for her outside nor yet in.'

'That ain't no odds.' Jabez shook his head till the water showered off his hat-brim. 'If Mary has money, she'll be wed before any likely pore maid. She's cause to be grateful to Jim.'

'She hides it middlin' close, then,' said Jesse. 'It don't sometimes look to me as if Mary has her natural rightful feelin's. She don't put on an apron o' Mondays 'thout being druv to it—in the kitchen *or* the hen-house. She's studyin' to be a school-teacher. She'll make a beauty! I never knowed her show any sort o' kindness

to nobody—not even when Jim's mother was took dumb. No! 'Twadn't no stroke. It stifled the old lady in the throat here. First she couldn't shape her words no shape; then she clucked, like, an' lastly she couldn't more than suck down spoon-meat an' hold her peace. Jim took her to Doctor Harding, an' Harding he bundled her off to Brighton Hospital on a ticket, but they couldn't make no stay to her afflictions there; and she was bundled off to Lunnon, an' they lit a great old lamp inside her, and Jim told me they couldn't make out nothing in no sort there; and, along o' one thing an' another, an' all their spyin's and pryin's, she come back a hem sight worse than when she started. Jim said he'd have no more hospitalizin', so he give her a slate, which she tied to her waist-string, and what she was minded to say she writ on it.'

'Now, I never knowed that! But they're valley-folk,' Jabez repeated.

' 'Twadn't particular noticeable, for she wasn't a talkin' woman any time o' her days. Mary had all three's tongue. . . . Well, then, two years this summer, come what I'm tellin' you. Mary's Lunnon father, which they'd put clean out o' their minds, arrived down from Lunnon with the law on his side, sayin' he'd take his daughter back to Lunnon, after all. I was working for Mus' Dockett at Pounds Farm that summer, but I was obligin' Jim that evenin' muckin' out his pig-pen. I seed a stranger come traipsin' over the bridge agin' Wickenden's door-stones. 'Twadn't the new County Council bridge with the handrail. They hadn't given it in for a public right o' way then. 'Twas just a bit o' lathy old plank which Jim had throwed acrost the brook for his own conveniences.

The man wasn't drunk—only a little concerned in liquor, like—an' his back was a mask where he'd slipped in the muck comin' along. He went up the bricks past Jim's mother, which was feedin' the ducks, an' set himself down at the table inside—Jim was just changin' his socks—an' the man let Jim know all his rights and aims regardin' Mary. Then there just about *was* a hurly-bulloo? Jim's fust mind was to pitch him forth, but he'd done that once in his young days, and got six months up to Lewes jail along o' the man fallin' on his head. So he swallowed his spittle an' let him talk. The law about Mary *was* on the man's side from fust to last, for he showed us all the papers. Then Mary come downstairs—she'd been studyin' for an examination—an' the man tells her who he was, an' she says he had ought to have took proper care of his own flesh and blood while he had it by him, an' not to think he could ree-claim it when it suited. He says somethin' or other, but she looks him up an' down, front an' backwent, an' she just tongues him scadderin' out o' doors, and he went away stuffin' all the papers back into his hat, talkin' most abusefully. Then she come back an' freed her mind against Jim an' his mother for not havin' warned her of her upbringin's, which it come out she hadn't ever been told. They didn't say naun to her. They never did. *I*'d ha' packed her off with any man that would ha' took her—an' God's pity on him!'

'Umm!' said Jabez, and sucked his pipe.

'So then, that was the beginnin'. The man come back again next week or so, an' he catched Jim alone, 'thout his mother this time, an' he fair beazled him with his papers an' his talk—for the law *was* on his side—till Jim went down into his money-purse an' give him

ten shillings hush-money—he told me—to withdraw away for a bit an' leave Mary with 'em.'

'But that's no way to get rid o' man or woman,' Jabez said.

'No more 'tis. I told Jim so. "What can I do?" Jim says. "The law's *with* the man. I walk about daytimes thinkin' o' it till I sweats my underclothes wringin', an' I lie abed nights thinkin' o' it till I sweats my sheets all of a sop. 'Tisn't as if I was a young man," he says, "nor yet as if I was a pore man. Maybe he'll drink hisself to death." I e'en a'most told him outright what foolishness he was enterin' into, but he knowed it—he knowed it—because he said next time the man come 'twould be fifteen shillin's. An' next time 'twas. Just fifteen shillin's!'

'An' *was* the man her father?' asked Jabez.

'He had the proofs an' the papers. Jim showed me what that Lunnon Childern's Society had answered when Mary writ up to 'em an' taxed 'em with it. I lay she hadn't been proper polite in her letters to 'em, for they answered middlin' short. They said the matter was out o' their hands, but—let's see if I remember—oh, yes,—they ree-gretted there had been an oversight. I reckon they had sent Mary out in the candle-box as a orphan instead o' havin' a father. Terrible awkward! Then, when he'd drinked up the money, the man come again—in his usuals—an' he kept hammerin' on and hammerin' on about his duty to his pore dear wife, an' what he'd do for his dear daughter in Lunnon, till the tears runned down his two dirty cheeks an' he come away with more money. Jim used to slip it into his hand behind the door; but his mother she heard the chink. She didn't hold with hush-money. She'd write

out all her feelin's on the slate, an' Jim 'ud be settin' up half the night answerin' back an showing that the man had the law with him.'

'Hadn't that man no trade nor business, then?'

'He told me he was a printer. I reckon, though, he lived on the rates like the rest of 'em up there in Lunnon.'

'An' how did Mary take it?'

'She said she'd sooner go into service than go with the man. I reckon a mistress 'ud be middlin' put to it for a maid 'fore she put Mary into cap an' gown. She was studyin' to be a schoo-ool-teacher. A beauty she'll make! . . . Well, that was how things went that fall. Mary's Lunnon father kep' comin' an' comin' 'carden as he'd drinked out the money Jim gave him; an' each time he'd put up his price for not takin' Mary away. Jim's mother, she didn't like partin' with no money, an' bein' obliged to write her feelin's on the slate instead o' givin' 'em vent by mouth, she was just about mad. Just about she *was* mad!

'Come November, I lodged with Jim in the outside room over 'gainst his hen-house. I paid *her* my rent. I was workin' for Dockett at Pounds—gettin' chestnut-bats out o' Perry Shaw. Just such weather as this be—rain atop o' rain after a wet October. (An' I remember it ended in dry frostes right away up to Christmas.) Dockett he'd sent up to Perry Shaw for me—no, he comes puffin' up to me himself—because a big corner-piece o' the bank had slipped into the brook where she makes that elber at the bottom o' the Seventeen Acre, an' all the rubbishy alders an' sallies which he ought to have cut out when he took the farm, they'd slipped with the slip, an' the brook was comin' rooshin' down

atop of 'em, an' they'd just about back an' spill the waters over his winter wheat. The water was lyin' in the flats already. "Gor a-mighty, Jesse!" he bellers out at me, "get that rubbish away all manners you can. Don't stop for no fagottin', but give the brook play or my wheat's past salvation. I can't lend you no help," he says, "but work an' I'll pay ye."'

'You had him there,' Jabez chuckled.

'Yes. I reckon I had ought to have drove my bargain, but the brook was backin' up on good bread-corn. So 'cardenly, I laid into the mess of it, workin' off the bank where the trees was drownin' themselves head-down in the roosh—just such weather as this—an' the brook creepin' up on me all the time. 'Long toward noon, Jim comes mowchin' along with his toppin' axe over his shoulder.

'"Be you minded for an extra hand at your job?" he says.

'"Be you minded to turn to?" I ses, an'—no more talk to it—Jim laid in alongside o' me. He's no bunger with a toppin' axe.'

'Maybe, but I've seed him at a job o' throwin' in the woods, an' he didn't seem to make out no shape,' said Jabez. 'He haven't got the shoulders, nor yet the judgment—*my* opinion—when he's dealin' with full-girt timber. He don't rightly make up his mind where he's goin' to throw her.'

'We wasn't throwin' nothin'. We was cuttin' out they soft alders, an' haulin' 'em up the bank 'fore they could back the waters on the wheat. Jim didn't say much, 'less it was that he'd had a post-card from Mary's Lunnon father, night before, sayin' he was comin' down that mornin'. Jim, he'd sweated all night, an' he

didn't reckon hisself equal to the talkin' an' the swearin' an' the cryin', an' his mother blamin' him afterwards on the slate. "It spiled my day to think of it," he ses, when we was eatin' our pieces. "So I've fair cried dunghill an' run. Mother'll have to tackle him by herself. I lay *she* won't give him no hush-money," he ses. "I lay he'll be surprised by the time he's done with *her*," he ses. An' that was e'en a'most all the talk we had concernin' it. But he's no bunger with the toppin' axe.

'The brook she'd crep' up an' up on us, an' she kep' creepin' upon us till we was workin' knee-deep in the shallers, cuttin' an' pookin' an' pullin' what we could get to o' the rubbish. There was a middlin' lot comin' down-stream, too—cattle-bars an' hop-poles and odds-ends bats, all poltin' down together; but they rooshed round the elber good shape by the time we'd backed out they drowned trees. Come four o'clock we reckoned we'd done a proper day's work, an' she'd take no harm if we left her. We couldn't puddle about there in the dark an' wet to no more advantage. Jim he was pourin' the water out of his boots—no, I was doin' that. Jim was kneelin' to unlace his'n. "Damn it all, Jesse," he ses, standin' up; "the flood must be over my door-steps at home, for here comes my old white-top bee-skep!"'

'Yes. I allus heard he paints his bee-skeps,' Jabez put in. 'I dunno paint don't tarrify bees more'n it keeps 'em dry.'

'"I'll have a pook at it," he ses, an' he pooks at it as it comes round the elber. The roosh nigh jerked the pooker out of his hand-grips, an' he calls to me, an' I come runnin' barefoot. Then we pulled on the pooker, an' it reared up on eend in the roosh, an' we guessed

what 'twas. 'Cardenly we pulled it in into a shaller, an' it rolled a piece, an' a great old stiff man's arm nigh hit me in the face. Then we was sure. "'Tis a man," ses Jim. But the face was all a mask. "I reckon it's Mary's Lunnon father," he ses presently. "Lend me a match and I'll make sure." He never used baccy. We lit three matches one by another, well's we could in the rain, an' he cleaned off some o' the slob with a tussick o' grass. "Yes," he ses. "It's Mary's Lunnon father. He won't tarrify us no more. D'you want him, Jesse?" he ses.

'"No," I ses. "If this was Eastbourne beach like, he'd be half-a-crown apiece to us 'fore the coroner; but now we'd only lose a day havin' to 'tend the inquest. I lay he fell into the brook."

'"I lay he did," ses Jim. "I wonder if he saw mother." He turns him over, an' opens his coat and puts his fingers in the waistcoat pocket an' starts laughin'. "He's seen mother, right enough," he ses. "An' he's got the best of her, too. *She* won't be able to crow no more over *me* 'bout givin' him money. *I* never give him more than a sovereign. She's give him two!" an' he trousers 'em, laughin' all the time. "An' now we'll pook him back again, for I've done with him," he ses.

'So we pooked him back into the middle of the brook, an' we saw he went round the elber 'thout balkin,' an' we walked quite a piece beside of him to set him on his ways. When we couldn't see no more, we went home by the high road, because we knowed the brook 'u'd be out acrost the medders, an' we wasn't goin' to hunt for Jim's little rotten old bridge in that dark—an' rainin' Heavens' hard, too. I was middlin' pleased to see light an' vittles again when we got home. Jim he pressed

me to come insides for a drink. He don't drink in a generality, but he was rid of all his troubles that evenin', d'ye see? "Mother," he ses so soon as the door ope'd, "have you seen him?" She whips out her slate an' writes down—"No." "Oh, no," ses Jim. "You don't get out of it that way, mother. I lay you *have* seen him, an' I lay he's bested you for all your talk, same as he bested me. Make a clean breast of it, mother," he ses. "He got round you too." She was goin' for the slate again, but he stops her. "It's all right, mother," he ses. "I've seen him sense you have, an' he won't trouble us no more." The old lady looks up quick as a robin, an' she writes, "Did he say so?" "No," ses Jim, laughin'. "He didn't say so. That's how I know. But he bested *you*, mother. You can't have it in at *me* for bein' soft-hearted. You're twice as tender-hearted as what I be. Look!" he ses, an' he shows her the two sovereigns. "Put 'em away where they belong," he ses. "He won't never come for no more; an' now we'll have our drink," he ses, "for we've earned it."

'Nature-ally they weren't goin' to let me see where they kep' their monies. She went upstairs with it—for the whisky.'

'I never knowed Jim was a drinkin' man—in his own house, like,' said Jabez.

'No more he isn't; but what he takes he likes good. He won't tech no publican's hogwash acrost the bar. Four shillin's he paid for that bottle o' whisky. I know, because when the old lady brought it down there wasn't more'n jest a liddle few dreenin's an' dregs in it. Nothin' to set before neighbours, I do assure you.'

'"Why, 'twas half full last week, mother," he ses. "You don't mean," he ses, "you've given him all that

as well? It's two shillin's worth," he ses. (That's how I knowed he paid four.) "Well, well, mother, you be too tender-'earted to live. But I don't grudge it to him," he ses. "I don't grudge him nothin' he can keep. So, 'cardenly, we drinked up what little sup was left.'

'An' what come to Mary's Lunnon father?' said Jabez, after a full minute's silence.

'I be too tired to go readin' papers of evenin's; but Dockett he told me, that very week, I think, that they'd inquested on a man down at Robertsbridge which had polted and polted up agin' so many bridges an' banks, like, they couldn't make naun out of him.'

'An' what did Mary say to all these doin's?'

'The old lady bundled her off to the village 'fore her Lunnon father come, to buy week-end stuff (an' she forgot the half o' it). When we come in she was upstairs studyin' to be a school-teacher. None told her naun about it. 'Twadn't girls' affairs.'

''Reckon *she* knowed?' Jabez went on.

'She? She must have guessed it middlin' close when she saw her money come back. But she never mentioned it in writing so far's I know. She were more worritted that night on account of two-three her chickens bein' drowned, for the flood had skewed their old hen-house round on her postes. I cobbled her up next mornin' when the brook shrinked.'

'An' where did you find the bridge? Some fur downstream, didn't ye?'

'Just where she allus was. She hadn't shifted but very little. The brook had gulled out the bank a piece under one eend o' the plank, so's she was liable to tilt ye sideways if you wasn't careful. But I pooked three-four bricks under her, an' she was all plumb again.'

'Well, I dunno how it *looks* like, but let be how 'twill,' said Jabez, 'he hadn't no business to come down from Lunnon tarrifyin' people, an' threatenin' to take away children which they'd hobbed up for their lawful own—even if 'twas Mary Wickenden.'

'He had the business right enough, an' he had the law with him—no gettin' over that,' said Jesse. 'But he had the drink with him, too, an' that was where he failed, like.'

'Well, well! Let be how 'twill, the brook was a good friend to Jim. I see it now. I allus *did* wonder what he was gettin' at when he said that, when I talked to him about shiftin' the stack. "You dunno everythin'," he ses. "The Brook's been a good friend to me," he ses, "an' if she's minded to have a snatch at my hay, *I* ain't settin' out to withstand her."'

'I reckon she's about shifted it, too, by now,' Jesse chuckled. 'Hark! That ain't any slip off the bank which she's got hold of.'

The Brook had changed her note again. It sounded as though she were mumbling something soft.

THE LAND

When Julius Fabricius, Sub-Prefect of the Weald,
In the days of Diocletian owned our Lower River-field,
He called to him Hobdenius—a Briton of the Clay.
Saying: 'What about that River-piece for layin' in to hay?'

And the aged Hobden answered: 'I remember as a lad
My father told your father that she wanted dreenin' bad.
An' the more that you neeglect her the less you'll get her clean.
Have it jest *as* you've a mind to, but, if I was you, I'd dreen.'

So they drained it long and crossways in the lavish Roman style.
Still we find among the river-drift their flakes of ancient tile,
And in drouthy middle August, when the bones of meadows show,
We can trace the lines they followed sixteen hundred years ago.

AUGUSTANA LIBR

Then Julius Fabricius died as even Prefects do,
And after certain centuries, Imperial Rome died too.
Then did robbers enter Britain from across the Northern main
And our Lower River-field was won by Ogier the Dane.

Well could Ogier work his war-boat—well could Ogier wield his brand—
Much he knew of foaming waters—not so much of farming land.
So he called to him a Hobden of the old unaltered blood,
Saying: 'What about that River-bit, she doesn't look no good?'

And that aged Hobden answered: ''Tain't for *me* to interfere,
But I've known that bit o' meadow now for five and fifty year.
Have it *jest* as you've a mind to, but I've proved it time on time.
If you want to change her nature you have *got* to give her lime!'

Ogier sent his wains to Lewes, twenty hours' solemn walk,
And drew back great abundance of the cool, grey, healing chalk.
And old Hobden spread it broadcast, never heeding what was in't;
Which is why in cleaning ditches, now and then we find a flint.

Ogier died. His sons grew English. Anglo-Saxon was their name,
Till out of blossomed Normandy another pirate came;
For Duke William conquered England and divided with his men,
And our Lower River-field he gave to William of Warenne.

But the Brook (you know her habit) rose one rainy Autumn night
And tore down sodden flitches of the bank to left and right.
So, said William to his Bailiff as they rode their dripping rounds:
'Hob, what about that River-bit—the Brook's got up no bounds?'

And that aged Hobden answered: ' 'Tain't my business to advise,
But ye might ha' known 'twould happen from the way the valley lies.
When ye can't hold back the water you must try and save the sile.
Hev it jest as you've a *mind* to, but, if I was you, I'd spile!'

They spiled along the water-course with trunks of willow-trees
And planks of elms behind 'em and immortal oaken knees.

And when the spates of Autumn whirl the gravel-beds away
You can see their faithful fragments iron-hard in iron clay.

. . . . . .

Georgii Quinti Anno Sexto, I, who own the River-field,
Am fortified with title-deeds, attested, signed and sealed,
Guaranteeing me, my assigns, my executors and heirs
All sorts of powers and profits which—are neither mine nor theirs.

I have rights of chase and warren, as my dignity requires.
I can fish—but Hobden tickles. I can shoot—but Hobden wires.
I repair, but he reopens, certain gaps which, men allege,
Have been used by every Hobden since a Hobden swapped a hedge.

Shall I dog his morning progress o'er the track-betraying dew?
Demand his dinner-basket into which my pheasant flew?
Confiscate his evening faggot into which the conies ran,
And summons him to judgment? I would sooner summons Pan.

His dead are in the churchyard—thirty generations laid.
Their names went down in Domesday Book when Domesday Book was made.
And the passion and the piety and prowess of his line
Have seeded, rooted, fruited in some land the Law calls mine.

Not for any beast that burrows, not for any bird that flies,
Would I lose his large sound council, miss his keen amending eyes.
He is bailiff, woodman, wheelwright, field-surveyor, engineer,
And if flagrantly a poacher—'tain't for me to interfere.

'Hob, what about that River-bit?' I turn to him again
With Fabricius and Ogier and William of Warenne.
'Hev it jest as you've a mind to, *but*'—and so he takes command.
For whoever pays the taxes old Mus' Hobden owns the land.

IN THE SAME BOAT

(1911)

'A THROBBING vein,' said Dr. Gilbert soothingly, 'is the mother of delusion.'

'Then how do you account for my knowing when the thing is due?' Conroy's voice rose almost to a break.

'Of course, but you should have consulted a doctor before using—palliatives.'

'It was driving me mad. And now I can't give them up.'

''Not so bad as that! One doesn't form fatal habits at twenty-five. Think again. Were you ever frightened as a child?'

'I don't remember. It began when I was a boy.'

'With or without the spasm? By the way, do you mind describing the spasm again?'

'Well,' said Conroy, twisting in the chair, 'I'm no musician, but suppose you were a violin-string—vibrating—and some one put his finger on you? As if a finger were put on the naked soul! Awful!'

'So's indigestion—so's nightmare—while it lasts.'

'But the horror afterwards knocks me out for days. And the waiting for it . . . and then this drug habit! It can't go on!' He shook as he spoke, and the chair creaked.

'My dear fellow,' said the doctor, 'when you're older you'll know what burdens the best of us carry. A fox to every Spartan.'

'That doesn't help *me*. I can't! I can't!' cried Conroy, and burst into tears.

'Don't apologise,' said Gilbert, when the paroxysm ended. 'I'm used to people coming a little—unstuck in this room.'

'It's those tabloids!' Conroy stamped his foot feebly as he blew his nose. 'They've knocked me out. I used to be fit once. Oh, I've tried exercise and everything. But—if one sits down for a minute when it's due—even at four in the morning—it runs up behind one.'

'Ye-es. Many things come in the quiet of the morning. You always know when the visitation is due?'

'What would I give not to be sure!' he sobbed.

'We'll put that aside for the moment. I'm thinking of a case where what we'll call anæmia of the brain was masked (I don't say cured) by vibration. He couldn't sleep, or thought he couldn't, but a steamer voyage and the thump of the screw——'

'A steamer? After what I've told you!' Conroy almost shrieked. 'I'd sooner . . .'

'Of course *not* a steamer in your case, but a long railway journey the next time you think it will trouble you. It sounds absurd, but——'

'I'd try anything. I nearly have,' Conroy sighed.

'Nonsense! I've given you a tonic that will clear *that* notion from your head. Give the train a chance, and don't begin the journey by bucking yourself up with tabloids. Take them along, but hold them in reserve—in reserve.'

'D'you think I've self-control enough, after what you've heard?' said Conroy.

Dr. Gilbert smiled. 'Yes. After what I've seen,' he glanced round the room, 'I have no hesitation in saying you have quite as much self-control as many other people. I'll write you later about your journey. Meantime, the tonic,' and he gave some general directions before Conroy left.

An hour later Dr. Gilbert hurried to the links, where the others of his regular week-end game awaited him. It was a rigid round, played as usual at the trot, for the tension of the week lay as heavy on the two King's Counsels and Sir John Chartres as on Gilbert. The lawyers were old enemies of the Admiralty Court, and Sir John of the frosty eyebrows and Abernethy manner was bracketed with, but before, Rutherford Gilbert among nerve-specialists.

At the Club-house afterwards the lawyers renewed their squabble over a tangled collision case, and the doctors as naturally compared professional matters.

'Lies—all lies,' said Sir John, when Gilbert had told him Conroy's trouble. '*Post hoc, propter hoc.* The man or woman who drugs is *ipso facto* a liar. You've no imagination.'

''Pity you haven't a little—occasionally.'

'I have believed a certain type of patient in my time. It's always the same. For reasons not given in the consulting-room they take to the drug. Certain symptoms follow. They will swear to you, and believe it, that they took the drug to mask the symptoms. What does your man use? Najdolene? I thought so. I had practically the duplicate of your case last Thursday. Same old Najdolene—same old lie.'

'Tell me the symptoms, and I'll draw my own inferences, Johnnie.'

'Symptoms! The girl was rank poisoned with Najdolene. Ramping, stamping possession. Gad, I thought she'd have the chandelier down.'

'Mine came unstuck too, and he has the physique of a bull,' said Gilbert. 'What delusions had yours?'

'Faces—faces with mildew on them. In any other walk of life we'd call it the Horrors. She told me, of course, she took the drugs to mask the faces. *Post hoc, propter hoc* again. All liars!'

'What's that?' said the senior K.C. quickly. ''Sounds professional.'

'Go away! Not for you, Sandy.' Sir John turned a shoulder against him and walked with Gilbert in the chill evening.

To Conroy in his chambers came, one week later, this letter:

Dear Mr. Conroy—If your plan of a night's trip on the 17th still holds good, and you have no particular destination in view, you could do me a kindness. A Miss Henschil, in whom I am interested, goes down to the West by the 10.8 from Waterloo (Number 3 platform) on that night. She is not exactly an invalid, but, like so many of us, a little shaken in her nerves. Her maid, of course, accompanies her, but if I knew you were in the same train it would be an additional source of strength. Will you please write and let me know whether the 10.8 from Waterloo, Number 3 platform, on the 17th, suits you, and I will meet you there? Don't forget my caution, and keep up the tonic.—Yours sincerely,

L. Rutherford Gilbert.

'He knows I'm scarcely fit to look after myself,' was Conroy's thought. 'And he wants me to look after a woman!'

Yet, at the end of half an hour's irresolution, he accepted.

Now Conroy's trouble, which had lasted for years, was this:

On a certain night, while he lay between sleep and wake, he would be overtaken by a long shuddering sigh, which he learned to know was the sign that his brain had once more conceived its horror, and in time—in due time—would bring it forth.

Drugs could so well veil that horror that it shuffled along no worse than as a freezing dream in a procession of disorderly dreams; but over the return of the event drugs had no control. Once that sigh had passed his lips the thing was inevitable, and through the days granted before its rebirth he walked in torment. For the first two years he had striven to fend it off by distractions, but neither exercise nor drink availed. Then he had come to the tabloids of the excellent M. Najdol. These guarantee, on the label, 'Refreshing and absolutely natural sleep to the soul-weary.' They are carried in a case with a spring which presses one scented tabloid to the end of the tube, whence it can be lipped off in stroking the moustache or adjusting the veil.

Three years of M. Najdol's preparations do not fit a man for many careers. His friends, who knew he did not drink, assumed that Conroy had strained his heart through valiant outdoor exercises, and Conroy had with some care invented an imaginary doctor, symptoms, and regimen, which he discussed with them and with his

mother in Hereford. She maintained that he would grow out of it, and recommended nux vomica.

When at last Conroy faced a real doctor, it was, he hoped, to be saved from suicide by a strait-waistcoat. Yet Dr. Gilbert had but given him more drugs—a tonic, for instance, that would couple railway carriages—and had advised a night in the train. Not alone the horrors of a railway journey (for which a man who dare keep no servant must e'en pack, label, and address his own bag), but the necessity for holding himself in hand before a stranger 'a little shaken in her nerves.'

He spent a long forenoon packing, because when he assembled and counted things his mind slid off to the hours that remained of the day before his night, and he found himself counting minutes aloud. At such times the injustice of his fate would drive him to revolts which no servant should witness, but on this evening Dr. Gilbert's tonic held him fairly calm while he put up his patent razors.

Waterloo Station shook him into real life. The change for his ticket needed concentration, if only to prevent shillings and pence turning into minutes at the booking-office; and he spoke quickly to a porter about the disposition of his bag. The old 10.8 from Waterloo to the West was an all-night caravan that halted, in the interests of the milk traffic, at almost every station.

Dr. Gilbert stood by the door of the one composite corridor-coach; an older and stouter man behind him. 'So glad you're here!' he cried. 'Let me get your ticket.'

'Certainly not,' Conroy answered. 'I got it myself—long ago. My bag's in too,' he added proudly.

'I beg your pardon. Miss Henschil's here. I'll introduce you.'

'But—but,' he stammered—'think of the state I'm in. If anything happens I shall collapse.'

'Not you. You'd rise to the occasion like a bird. And as for the self-control you were talking of the other day'—Gilbert swung him round—'look!'

A young man in an ulster over a silk-faced frock-coat stood by the carriage window, weeping shamelessly.

'Oh, but that's only drink,' Conroy said. 'I haven't had one of my—my things since lunch.'

'Excellent!' said Gilbert. 'I knew I could depend on you. Come along. Wait for a minute, Chartres.'

A tall woman, veiled, sat by the far window. She bowed her head as the doctor murmured Conroy knew not what. Then he disappeared and the inspector came for tickets.

'My maid—next compartment,' she said slowly.

Conroy showed his ticket, but in returning it to the sleeve-pocket of his ulster the little silver Najdolene case slipped from his glove and fell to the floor. He snatched it up as the moving train flung him into his seat.

'How nice!' said the woman. She leisurely lifted her veil, unbuttoned the first button of her left glove, and pressed out from its palm a Najdolene-case.

'Don't!' said Conroy, not realising he had spoken.

'I beg your pardon.' The deep voice was measured, even, and low. Conroy knew what made it so.

'I said "don't"! He wouldn't like you to do it!'

'No, he would not.' She held the tube with its ever-presented tabloid between finger and thumb. 'But aren't you one of the—ah—"soul-weary" too?'

'That's why. Oh, please don't! Not at first. I—I haven't had one since morning. You—you'll set me off!'

'You? Are you so far gone as that?'

He nodded, pressing his palms together. The train jolted through Vauxhall points, and was welcomed with the clang of empty milk-cans for the West.

After long silence she lifted her great eyes, and, with an innocence that would have deceived any sound man, asked Conroy to call her maid to bring her a forgotten book.

Conroy shook his head. 'No. Our sort can't read. Don't!'

'Were you sent to watch me?' The voice never changed.

'Me? I need a keeper myself much more—*this* night of all!'

'This night? Have you a night, then? They disbelieved *me* when I told them of mine.' She leaned back and laughed, always slowly. 'Aren't doctors stu-upid? They don't know.'

She leaned her elbow on her knee, lifted her veil that had fallen, and, chin in hand, stared at him. He looked at her—till his eyes were blurred with tears.

'Have *I* been there, think you?' she said.

'Surely—surely,' Conroy answered, for he had well seen the fear and the horror that lived behind the heavy-lidded eyes, the fine tracing on the broad forehead, and the guard set about the desirable mouth.

'Then—suppose we have one—just one apiece? I've gone without since this afternoon.'

He put up his hand, and would have shouted, but his voice broke.

'Don't! Can't you see that it helps me to help you to keep it off? Don't let's both go down together.'

'But I want one. It's a poor heart that never rejoices. Just one. It's my night.'

'It's mine—too. My sixty-fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh.' He shut his lips firmly against the tide of visualised numbers that threatened to carry him along.

'Ah, it's only my thirty-ninth.' She paused as he had done. 'I wonder if I shall last into the sixties. . . . Talk to me or I shall go crazy. You're a man. You're the stronger vessel. Tell me when you went to pieces.'

'One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—eight—I beg your pardon.'

'Not in the least. I always pretend I've dropped a stitch of my knitting. I count the days till the last day, then the hours, then the minutes. Do you?'

'I don't think I've done very much else for the last——' said Conroy, shivering, for the night was cold, with a chill he recognised.

'Oh, how comforting to find some one who can talk sense! It's not always the same date, is it?'

'What difference would that make?' He unbuttoned his ulster with a jerk. 'You're a sane woman. Can't you see the wicked—wicked—wicked' (dust flew from the padded arm-rest as he struck it) 'unfairness of it? What have *I* done?'

She laid her large hand on his shoulder very firmly.

'If you begin to think over that,' she said, 'you'll go to pieces and be ashamed. Tell me yours, and I'll tell you mine. Only be quiet—be quiet, lad, or you'll set me off!' She made shift to soothe him, though her chin trembled.

'Well,' said he at last, picking at the arm-rest between them, 'mine's nothing much, of course.'

'Don't be a fool! That's for doctors—and mothers.'

'It's Hell,' Conroy muttered. 'It begins on a steamer—on a stifling hot night. I come out of my cabin. I pass through the saloon where the stewards have rolled up the carpets, and the boards are bare and hot and soapy.'

'I've travelled too,' she said.

'Ah! I come on deck. I walk down a covered alleyway. Butcher's meat, bananas, oil, that sort of smell.'

Again she nodded.

'It's a lead-coloured steamer, and the sea's lead-coloured. Perfectly smooth sea—perfectly still ship, except for the engines running, and her waves going off in lines and lines and lines—dull grey. All this time I know something's going to happen.'

'*I* know. Something going to happen,' she whispered.

'Then I hear a thud in the engine-room. Then the noise of machinery falling down—like fire-irons—and then two most awful yells. They're more like hoots, and I know—I know while I listen—that it means that two men have died as they hooted. It was their last breath hooting out of them—in most awful pain. Do you understand?'

'I ought to. Go on.'

'That's the first part. Then I hear bare feet running along the alleyway. One of the scalded men comes up behind me and says quite distinctly, "My friend! All is lost!" Then he taps me on the shoulder and I hear him drop down dead.' He panted and wiped his forehead.

'So that is your night?' she said.

'That is my night. It comes every few weeks—so many days after I get what I call sentence. Then I begin to count.'

'Get sentence? D'you mean *this?*' She half closed her eyes, drew a deep breath, and shuddered. '"Notice" I call it. Sir John thought it was all lies.'

She had unpinned her hat and thrown it on the seat opposite, showing the immense mass of her black hair, rolled low in the nape of the columnar neck and looped over the left ear. But Conroy had no eyes except for her grave eyes.

'Listen now!' said she. 'I walk down a road, a white sandy road near the sea. There are broken fences on either side, and Men come and look at me over them.'

'Just men? Do they speak?'

'They try to. Their faces are all mildewy—eaten away,' and she hid her face for an instant with her left hand. 'It's the Faces—the Faces!'

'Yes. Like my two hoots. *I* know.'

'Ah! But the place itself—the bareness—and the glitter and the salt smells, and the wind blowing the sand! The Men run after me and I run. . . . I know what's coming too. One of them touches me.'

'Yes! What comes then? We've both shirked that.'

'One awful shock—not palpitation, but shock, shock, shock!'

'As though your soul were being stopped—as you'd stop a finger-bowl humming?' he said.

'Just that,' she answered. 'One's very soul—the soul that one lives by—stopped. So!'

She drove her thumb deep into the arm-rest. 'And

now,' she whined to him, 'now that we've stirred each other up this way, mightn't we have just one?'

'No,' said Conroy, shaking. 'Let's hold on. We're past'—he peered out of the black windows—'Woking. There's the Necropolis. How long till dawn?'

'Oh, cruel long yet. If one dozes for a minute, it catches one.'

'And how d'you find that this'—he tapped the palm of his glove—'helps you?'

'It covers up the thing from being too real—if one takes enough—you know. Only—only—one loses everything else. I've been no more than a bogie-girl for two years. What would you give to be real again? This lying's such a nuisance.'

'One must protect oneself—and there's one's mother to think of,' he answered.

'True. I hope allowances are made for us somewhere. Our burden—can you hear?—our burden is heavy enough.'

She rose, towering into the roof of the carriage. Conroy's ungentle grip pulled her back.

'Now *you* are foolish. Sit down,' said he.

'But the cruelty of it! Can't you see it? Don't you feel it? Let's take one now—before I——'

'Sit down!' cried Conroy, and the sweat stood again on his forehead. He had fought through a few nights, and had been defeated on more, and he knew the rebellion that flares beyond control to exhaustion.

She smoothed her hair and dropped back, but for a while her head and throat moved with the sickening motion of a captured wry-neck.

'Once,' she said, spreading out her hands, 'I ripped my counterpane from end to end. That takes strength.

I had it then. I've little now. "All dorn," as my little niece says. And you, lad?'

'"All dorn"! Let me keep your case for you till the morning.'

'But the cold feeling is beginning.'

'Lend it me, then.'

'And the drag down my right side. I shan't be able to move in a minute.'

'I can scarcely lift my arm myself,' said Conroy. 'We're in for it.'

'Then why are you so foolish? You know it'll be easier if we have only one—only one apiece.'

She was lifting the case to her mouth. With tremendous effort Conroy caught it. The two moved like jointed dolls, and when their hands met it was as wood on wood.

'You must—not!' said Conroy. His jaws stiffened, and the cold climbed from his feet up.

'Why—must—I—not?' She repeated the words idiotically.

Conroy could only shake his head, while he bore down on the hand and the case in it.

Her speech went from her altogether. The wonderful lips rested half over the even teeth, the breath was in the nostrils only, the eyes dulled, the face set grey, and through the glove the hand struck like ice.

Presently her soul came back and stood behind her eyes—only thing that had life in all that place—stood and looked for Conroy's soul. He too was fettered in every limb, but somewhere at an immense distance he heard his heart going about its work as the engine-room carries on through and beneath the all but overwhelming wave. His one hope, he knew, was not to lose the

eyes that clung to his, because there was an Evil abroad which would possess him if he looked aside by a hair-breadth.

The rest was darkness through which some distant planet spun while cymbals clashed. (Beyond Farnborough the 10.8 rolls out many empty milk-cans at every halt.) Then a body came to life with intolerable pricklings. Limb by limb, after agonies of terror, that body returned to him, steeped in most perfect physical weariness such as follows a long day's rowing. He saw the heavy lids droop over her eyes—the watcher behind them departed—and, his soul sinking into assured peace, Conroy slept.

Light on his eyes and a salt breath roused him without shock. Her hand still held his. She slept, forehead down upon it, but the movement of his waking waked her too, and she sneezed like a child.

'I—I think it's morning,' said Conroy.

'And nothing has happened! Did you see your Men? I didn't see my Faces. Does it mean we've escaped? Did—did you take any after I went to sleep? I'll swear *I* didn't,' she stammered.

'No, there wasn't any need. We've slept through it.'

'No need! Thank God! There was no need! Oh, look!'

The train was running under red cliffs along a sea-wall washed by waves that were colourless in the early light. Southward the sun rose mistily upon the Channel.

She leaned out of the window and breathed to the bottom of her lungs, while the wind wrenched down her dishevelled hair and blew it below her waist.

'Well!' she said with splendid eyes. 'Aren't you still waiting for something to happen?'

'No. Not till next time. We've been let off,' Conroy answered, breathing as deeply as she.

'Then we ought to say our prayers.'

'What nonsense! Some one will see us.'

'We needn't kneel. Stand up and say "Our Father." We *must!*'

It was the first time since childhood that Conroy had prayed. They laughed hysterically when a curve threw them against an arm-rest.

'Now for breakfast!' she cried. 'My maid—Nurse Blaber—has the basket and things. It'll be ready in twenty minutes. Oh! Look at my hair!' and she went out laughing.

Conroy's first discovery, made without fumbling or counting letters on taps, was that the London and South Western's allowance of washing-water is inadequate. He used every drop, rioting in the cold tingle on neck and arms. To shave in a moving train balked him, but the next halt gave him a chance, which, to his own surprise, he took. As he stared at himself in the mirror he smiled and nodded. There were points about this person with the clear, if sunken, eye and the almost uncompressed mouth. But when he bore his bag back to his compartment, the weight of it on a limp arm humbled that new pride.

'My friend,' he said, half aloud, 'you go into training. You're putty.'

She met him in the spare compartment, where her maid had laid breakfast.

'By Jove!' he said, halting at the doorway, 'I hadn't realised how beautiful you were!'

'The same to you, lad. Sit down. I could eat a horse.'

'I shouldn't,' said the maid quietly. 'The less you eat the better.' She was a small, freckled woman, with light fluffy hair and pale-blue eyes that looked through all veils.

'This is Miss Blaber,' said Miss Henschil. 'He's one of the soul-weary too, Nursey.'

'I know it. But when one has just given it up a full meal doesn't agree. That's why I've only brought you bread and butter.'

She went out quietly, and Conroy reddened.

'We're still children, you see,' said Miss Henschil. 'But I'm well enough to feel some shame of it. D'you take sugar?'

They starved together heroically, and Nurse Blaber was good enough to signify approval when she came to clear away.

'Nursey?' Miss Henschil insinuated, and flushed.

'Do you smoke?' said the nurse coolly to Conroy.

'I haven't in years. Now you mention it, I think I'd like a cigarette—or something.'

'I used to. D'you think it would keep me quiet?' Miss Henschil said.

'Perhaps. Try these.' The nurse handed them her cigarette-case.

'Don't take anything else,' she commanded, and went away with the tea-basket.

'Good!' grunted Conroy, between mouthfuls of tobacco.

''Better than nothing,' said Miss Henschil; but for a while they felt ashamed, yet with the comfort of children punished together.

'Now,' she whispered, 'who were you when you were a man?'

Conroy told her, and in return she gave him her history. It delighted them both to deal once more in worldly concerns—families, names, places, and dates—with a person of understanding.

She came, she said, of Lancashire folk—wealthy cotton-spinners, who still kept the broadened *a* and slurred aspirate of the old stock. She lived with an old masterful mother in an opulent world north of Lancaster Gate, where people in Society gave parties at a Mecca called the Langham Hotel.

She herself had been launched into Society there, and the flowers at the ball had cost eighty-seven pounds; but, being reckoned peculiar, she had made few friends among her own sex. She had attracted many men, for she was a beauty—*the* beauty, in fact, of Society, she said.

She spoke utterly without shame or reticence, as a life-prisoner tells his past to a fellow-prisoner; and Conroy nodded across the smoke-rings.

'Do you remember when you got into the carriage?' she asked. '(Oh, I wish I had some knitting!) Did you notice aught, lad?'

Conroy thought back. It was ages since. 'Wasn't there some one outside the door—crying?' he asked.

'He's—he's the little man I was engaged to,' she said. 'But I made him break it off. I told him 'twas no good. But he won't, yo' see.'

'*That* fellow? Why, he doesn't come up to your shoulder.'

'That's naught to do with it. I think all the world of him. I'm a foolish wench'—her speech wandered as she settled herself cosily, one elbow on the arm-rest. 'We'd been engaged—I couldn't help that—and he

worships the ground I tread on. But it's no use. I'm not responsible, you see. His two sisters are against it, though I've the money. They're right, but they think it's the dri-ink,' she drawled. 'They're Methody—the Skinners. You see, their grandfather that started the Patton Mills, he died o' the dri-ink.'

'I see,' said Conroy. The grave face before him under the lifted veil was troubled.

'George Skinner.' She breathed it softly. 'I'd make him a good wife, by God's gra-ace—if I could. But it's no use. I'm not responsible. But he'll not take "No" for an answer. I used to call him "Toots." He's of no consequence, yo' see.'

'That's in Dickens,' said Conroy, quite quickly. 'I haven't thought of Toots for years. He was at Doctor Blimber's.'

'And so—that's my trouble,' she concluded, ever so slightly wringing her hands. 'But I—don't you think —there's hope now?'

'Eh?' said Conroy. 'Oh yes! This is the first time I've turned my corner without help. With your help, I should say.'

'It'll come back, though.'

'Then shall we meet it in the same way? Here's my card. Write me your train, and we'll go together.'

'Yes. We must do that. But between times—when we want——' She looked at her palm, the four fingers working on it. 'It's hard to give 'em up.'

'But think what we have gained already, and let me have the case to keep.'

She shook her head, and threw her cigarette out of the window. 'Not yet.'

'Then let's lend our cases to Nurse, and we'll get

through to-day on cigarettes. I'll call her while we feel strong.'

She hesitated, but yielded at last, and Nurse accepted the offerings with a smile.

'*You'll* be all right,' she said to Miss Henschil. 'But if I were you'—to Conroy—'I'd take strong exercise.'

When they reached their destination Conroy set himself to obey Nurse Blaber. He had no remembrance of that day, except one streak of blue sea to his left, gorse-bushes to his right, and, before him, a coast-guard's track marked with white-washed stones that he counted up to the far thousands. As he returned to the little town he saw Miss Henschil on the beach below the cliffs. She kneeled at Nurse Blaber's feet, weeping and pleading.

Twenty-five days later a telegram came to Conroy's rooms: '*Notice given. Waterloo again. Twenty-fourth.*' That same evening he was wakened by the shudder and the sigh that told him his sentence had gone forth. Yet he reflected on his pillow that he had, in spite of lapses, snatched something like three weeks of life, which included several rides on a horse before breakfast —the hour one most craves Najdolene; five consecutive evenings on the river at Hammersmith in a tub where he had well stretched the white arms that passing crews mocked at; a game of rackets at his club; three dinners, one small dance, and one human flirtation with a human woman. More notable still, he had settled his month's accounts, only once confusing petty cash with the days of grace allowed him. Next morning he rode his hired beast in the park victoriously. He saw Miss

Henschil on horse-back near Lancaster Gate, talking to a young man at the railings.

She wheeled and cantered towards him.

'By Jove! How well you look!' he cried, without salutation. 'I didn't know you rode.'

'I used to once,' she replied. 'I'm all soft now.'

They swept off together down the ride.

'Your beast pulls,' he said.

'Wa-ant him to. Gi-gives me something to think of. How've you been?' she panted. 'I wish chemists' shops hadn't red lights.'

'Have you slipped out and bought some, then?'

'You don't know Nursey. Eh, but it's good to be on a horse again! This chap cost me two hundred.'

'Then you've been swindled,' said Conroy.

'I know it, but it's no odds. I must go back to Toots and send him away. He's neglecting his work for me.'

She swung her heavy-topped animal on his none too sound hocks. ''Sentence come, lad?'

'Yes. But I'm not minding it so much this time.'

'Waterloo, then—and God help us!' She thundered back to the little frock-coated figure that waited faithfully near the gate.

Conroy felt the spring sun on his shoulders and trotted home. That evening he went out with a man in a pair oar, and was rowed to a standstill. But the other man owned he could not have kept the pace five minutes longer.

He carried his bag all down Number 3 platform at Waterloo, and hove it with one hand into the rack.

'Well done!' said Nurse Blaber, in the corridor. 'We've improved too.'

Dr. Gilbert and an older man came out of the next compartment.

'Hallo!' said Gilbert. 'Why haven't you been to see me, Mr. Conroy? Come under the lamp. Take off your hat. No—no. Sit, you young giant. Ve-ry good. Look here a minute, Johnnie.'

A little, round-bellied, hawk-faced person glared at him.

'Gilbert was right about the beauty of the beast,' he muttered. 'D'you keep it in your glove now?' he went on, and punched Conroy in the short ribs.

'No,' said Conroy meekly, but without coughing. 'Nowhere—on my honour! I've chucked it for good.'

'Wait till you are a sound man before you say *that*, Mr. Conroy.' Sir John Chartres stumped out, saying to Gilbert in the corridor, 'It's all very fine, but the question is shall I or we "Sir Pandarus of Troy become," eh? We're bound to think of the children.'

'Have you been vetted?' said Miss Henschil, a few minutes after the train started. 'May I sit with you? I—I don't trust myself yet. I can't give up as easily as you can, seemingly.'

'Can't you? I never saw any one so improved in a month.'

'Look here!' She reached across to the rack, single-handed lifted Conroy's bag, and held it at arm's length. 'I counted ten slowly. And I didn't think of hours or minutes,' she boasted.

'Don't remind me,' he cried.

'Ah! Now I've reminded myself. I wish I hadn't. Do you think it'll be easier for us to-night?'

'Oh, don't.' The smell of the carriage had brought back all his last trip to him, and Conroy moved uneasily.

'I'm sorry. I've brought some games,' she went on. 'Draughts and cards—but they all mean counting. I wish I'd brought chess, but I can't play chess. What can we do? Talk about something.'

'Well, how's Toots, to begin with?' said Conroy.

'Why? Did you see him on the platform?'

'No. Was he there? I didn't notice.'

'Oh yes. He doesn't understand. He's desperately jealous. I told him it doesn't matter. Will you please let me hold your hand? I believe I'm beginning to get the chill.'

'Toots ought to envy me,' said Conroy.

'He does. He paid you a high compliment the other night. He's taken to calling again—in spite of all they say.'

Conroy inclined his head. He felt cold, and knew surely he would be colder.

'He said,' she yawned. '(Beg your pardon.) He said he couldn't see how I could help falling in love with a man like you; and he called himself a damned little rat, and he beat his head on the piano last night.'

'The piano? You play, then?'

'Only to him. He thinks the world of my accomplishments. Then I told him I wouldn't have you if you were the last man on earth instead of only the best-looking—not with a million in each stocking.'

'No, not with a million in each stocking,' said Conroy vehemently. 'Isn't that odd?'

'I suppose so—to any one who doesn't know. Well, where was I? Oh, George as good as told me I was deceiving him, and he wanted to go away without saying good-night. He hates standing a-tiptoe, but he must if I won't sit down.'

Conroy would have smiled, but the chill that foreran the coming of the Lier-in-Wait was upon him, and his hand closed warningly on hers.

'And—and so—' she was trying to say, when her hour also overtook her, leaving alive only the fear-dilated eyes that turned to Conroy. Hand froze on hand and the body with it as they waited for the horror in the blackness that heralded it. Yet through the worst Conroy saw, at an uncountable distance, one minute glint of light in his night. Thither would he go and escape his fear; and behold, that light was the light in the watch-tower of her eyes, where her locked soul signalled to his soul: 'Look at me!'

In time, from him and from her, the Thing sheered aside, that each soul might step down and resume its own concerns. He thought confusedly of people on the skirts of a thunderstorm, withdrawing from windows where the torn night is, to their known and furnished beds. Then he dozed, till in some drowsy turn his hand fell from her warmed hand.

'That's all. The Faces haven't come,' he heard her say. 'All—thank God! I don't feel even I need what Nursey promised me. Do you?'

'No.' He rubbed his eyes. 'But don't make too sure.'

'Certainly not. We shall have to try again next month. I'm afraid it will be an awful nuisance for you.'

'Not to me, I assure you,' said Conroy, and they leaned back and laughed at the flatness of the words, after the hells through which they had just risen.

'And now,' she said, strict eyes on Conroy, '*why* wouldn't you take me—not with a million in each stocking?'

'I don't know. That's what I've been puzzling over.'

'So have I. We're as handsome a couple as I've ever seen. Are you well off, lad?'

'They call me so,' said Conroy, smiling.

'That's North country.' She laughed again. 'Setting aside my good looks and yours, I've four thousand a year of my own, and the rents should make it six. That's a match some old cats would lap tea all night to fettle up.'

'It is. Lucky Toots!' said Conroy.

'Ay,' she answered, 'he'll be the luckiest lad in London if I win through. Who's yours?'

'No—no one, dear. I've been in Hell for years. I only want to get out and be alive and—so on. Isn't that reason enough?'

'Maybe, for a man. But I never minded things much till George came. I was all stu-upid like.'

'So was I, but now I think I can live. It ought to be less next month, oughtn't it?' he said.

'I hope so. Ye-es. There's nothing much for a maid except to be married, and *I* ask no more. Whoever yours is, when you've found her, she shall have a wedding present from Mrs. George Skinner that——'

'But she wouldn't understand it any more than Toots.'

'He doesn't matter—except to me. I can't keep my eyes open, thank God! Good-night, lad.'

Conroy followed her with his eyes. Beauty there was, grace there was, strength, and enough of the rest to drive better men than George Skinner to beat their heads on piano-tops—but for the new-found life of him Conroy could not feel one flutter of instinct or emotion that turned to herward. He put up his feet and fell

asleep, dreaming of a joyous, normal world recovered—with interest on arrears. There were many things in it, but no one face of any one woman.

. . . . . .

Thrice afterward they took the same train, and each time their trouble shrank and weakened. Miss Henschil talked of Toots, his multiplied calls, the things he had said to his sisters, the much worse things his sisters had replied; of the late (he seemed very dead to them) M. Najdol's gifts for the soul-weary; of shopping, of house rents, and the cost of really artistic furniture and linen.

Conroy explained the exercises in which he delighted—mighty labours of play undertaken against other mighty men, till he sweated and, having bathed, slept. He had visited his mother, too, in Hereford, and he talked something of her and of the home-life, which his body, cut out of all clean life for five years, innocently and deeply enjoyed. Nurse Blaber was a little interested in Conroy's mother, but, as a rule, she smoked her cigarette and read her paper-backed novels in her own compartment.

On their last trip she volunteered to sit with them, and buried herself in *The Cloister and the Hearth* while they whispered together. On that occasion (it was near Salisbury) at two in the morning, when the Lier-in-Wait brushed them with his wing, it meant no more than that they should cease talk for the instant, and for the instant hold hands, as even utter strangers on the deep may do when their ship rolls underfoot.

'But still,' said Nurse Blaber, not looking up, 'I think your Mr. Skinner might feel jealous of all this.'

'It would be difficult to explain,' said Conroy.

'Then you'd better not be at my wedding,' Miss Henschil laughed.

'After all we've gone through, too. But I suppose you ought to leave me out. Is the day fixed?' he cried.

'Twenty-second of September—in spite of both his sisters. I can risk it now.' Her face was glorious as she flushed.

'My dear chap!' He shook hands unreservedly, and she gave back his grip without flinching. 'I can't tell you how pleased I am!'

'Gracious Heavens!' said Nurse Blaber, in a new voice. 'Oh, I beg your pardon. I forgot I wasn't paid to be surprised.'

'What at? Oh, I see!' Miss Henschil explained to Conroy. 'She expected you were going to kiss me, or I was going to kiss you, or something.'

'After all you've gone through, as Mr. Conroy said.'

'But I couldn't, could you?' said Miss Henschil, with a disgust as frank as that on Conroy's face. 'It would be horrible—horrible. And yet, of course, you're wonderfully handsome. How d'you account for it, Nursey?'

Nurse Blaber shook her head. 'I was hired to cure you of a habit, dear. When you're cured I shall go on to the next case—that senile-decay one at Bournemouth I told you about.'

'And I shall be left alone with George! But suppose it isn't cured,' said Miss Henschil of a sudden. 'Suppose it comes back again. What can I do? I can't send for *him* in this way when I'm a married woman!' She pointed like an infant.

'I'd come, of course,' Conroy answered. 'But, seriously, that is a consideration.'

They looked at each other, alarmed and anxious, and then towards Nurse Blaber, who closed her book, marked the place, and turned to face them.

'Have you ever talked to your mother as you have to me?' she said.

'No. I might have spoken to dad—but mother's different. What d'you mean?'

'And you've never talked to your mother either, Mr. Conroy?'

'Not till I took Najdolene. Then I told her it was my heart. There's no need to say anything, now that I'm practically over it, is there?'

'Not if it doesn't come back, but——' She beckoned with a stumpy, triumphant finger that drew their heads close together. 'You know I always go in and read a chapter to mother at tea, child.'

'I know you do. You're an angel.' Miss Henschil patted the blue shoulder next her. 'Mother's Church of England now,' she explained. 'But she'll have her Bible with her pikelets at tea every night like the Skinners.'

'It was Naaman and Gehazi last Tuesday that gave me a clue. I said I'd never seen a case of leprosy, and your mother said she'd seen too many.'

'Where? She never told me,' Miss Henschil began.

'A few months before you were born—on her trip to Australia—at Mola or Molo something or other. It took me three evenings to get it all out.'

'Ay—mother's suspicious of questions,' said Miss Henschil to Conroy. 'She'll lock the door of every room she's in, if it's but for five minutes. She was a Tackberry from Jarrow way, yo' see.'

'She described your men to the life—men with faces all eaten away, staring at her over the fence of a lepers' hospital in this Molo Island. They begged from her, and she ran, she told me, all down the street, back to the pier. One touched her and she nearly fainted. She's ashamed of that still.'

'My men? The sand and the fences?' Miss Henschil muttered.

'Yes. You know how tidy she is and how she hates wind. She remembered that the fences were broken—she remembered the wind blowing. Sand—sun—salt wind—fences—faces—I got it all out of her, bit by bit. You don't know what I know! And it all happened three or four months before you were born. There!' Nurse Blaber slapped her knee with her little hand triumphantly.

'Would that account for it?' Miss Henschil shook from head to foot.

'Absolutely. I don't care who you ask! You never imagined the thing. It was *laid* on you. It happened on earth to *you!* Quick, Mr. Conroy, she's too heavy for me! I'll get the flask.'

Miss Henschil leaned forward and collapsed, as Conroy told her afterwards, like a factory chimney. She came out of her swoon with teeth that chattered on the cup.

'No—no,' she said, gulping. 'It's not hysterics. Yo' see I've no call to hev 'em any more. No call—no reason whatever. God be praised! Can't yo' *feel* I'm a right woman now?'

'Stop hugging me!' said Nurse Blaber. 'You don't know your strength. Finish the brandy and water. It's perfectly reasonable, and I'll lay long odds Mr.

Conroy's case is something of the same. I've been thinking——'

'I wonder——' said Conroy, and pushed the girl back as she swayed again.

Nurse Blaber smoothed her pale hair. 'Yes. Your trouble, or something like it, happened somewhere on earth or sea to the mother who bore you. Ask her, child. Ask her and be done with it once for all.'

'I will,' said Conroy. . . . 'There ought to be——' He opened his bag and hunted breathlessly.

'Bless you! Oh, God bless you, Nursey!' Miss Henschil was sobbing. 'You don't know what this means to me. It takes it all off—from the beginning.'

'But doesn't it make any difference to you now?' the nurse asked curiously. 'Now that you're rightfully a woman?'

Conroy, busy with his bag, had not heard. Miss Henschil stared across, and her beauty, freed from the shadow of any fear, blazed up within her. 'I see what you mean,' she said. 'But it hasn't changed anything. I want Toots. *He* has never been out of his mind in his life—except over silly me.'

'It's all right,' said Conroy, stooping under the lamp, Bradshaw in hand. 'If I change at Templecombe—for Bristol (Bristol—Hereford—yes)—I can be with mother for breakfast in her room and find out.'

'Quick, then,' said Nurse Blaber. 'We've passed Gillingham quite a while. You'd better take some of our sandwiches.' She went out to get them. Conroy and Miss Henschil would have danced, but there is no room for giants in a South-Western compartment.

'Good-bye, good luck, lad. Eh, but you've changed already—like me. Send a wire to our hotel as soon as

you're sure,' said Miss Henschil. 'What should I have done without you?'

'Or I?' said Conroy. 'But it's Nurse that's saving us really.'

'Then thank her,' said Miss Henschil, looking straight at him. 'Yes, I would. She'd like it.'

When Nurse Blaber came back after the parting at Templecombe her nose and her eyelids were red, but, for all that, her face reflected a great light even while she sniffed over *The Cloister and the Hearth.*

Miss Henschil, deep in a house furnisher's catalogue, did not speak for twenty minutes. Then she said, between adding totals of best, guest, and servants' sheets, 'But why should our times have been the same, Nursey?'

'Because a child is born somewhere every second of the clock,' Nurse Blaber answered. 'And besides that, you probably set each other off by talking and thinking about it. You shouldn't, you know.'

'Ay, but you've never been in Hell,' said Miss Henschil.

The telegram handed in at Hereford at 12.46 and delivered to Miss Henschil on the beach of a certain village at 2.7 ran thus:

'"*Absolutely confirmed. She says she remembers hearing noise of accident in engine-room returning from India eighty-five.*"'

'He means the year, not the thermometer,' said Nurse Blaber, throwing pebbles at the cold sea.

'"*And two men scalded thus explaining my hoots.*" (The idea of telling me that!) "*Subsequently silly clergyman passenger ran up behind her calling for joke, 'Friend, all is lost,' thus accounting very words.*"'

Nurse Blaber purred audibly.

'"*She says only remembers being upset minute or two. Unspeakable relief. Best love Nursey, who is jewel. Get out of her what she would like best.*" Oh, I oughtn't to have read that,' said Miss Henschil.

'It doesn't matter. I don't want anything,' said Nurse Blaber, 'and if I did I shouldn't get it.'

'HELEN ALL ALONE'

There was darkness under Heaven
  For an hour's space—
Darkness that we knew was given
  Us for special grace.
Sun and moon and stars were hid,
  God had left His Throne,
When Helen, came to me, she did,
  Helen all alone!

Side by side (because our fate
  Damned us ere our birth)
We stole out of Limbo Gate
  Looking for the Earth.
Hand in pulling hand amid
  Fear no dreams have known,
Helen ran with me, she did,
  Helen all alone!

When the Horror passing speech
  Hunted us along,
Each laid hold on each, and each
  Found the other strong.
In the teeth of things forbid
  And Reason overthrown,
Helen stood by me, she did,
  Helen all alone!

When, at last, we heard the Fires
  Dull and die away,
When, at last, our linked desires
  Dragged us up to day,
When, at last, our souls were rid
  Of what that Night had shown,
Helen passed from me, she did,
  Helen all alone!

Let her go and find a mate,
  As I will find a bride,
Knowing naught of Limbo Gate
  Or Who are penned inside.
There is knowledge God forbid
  More than one should own.
So Helen went from me, she did,
Oh my soul, be glad she did!
  Helen all alone!

THE HONOURS OF WAR

(1911)

A HOODED motor had followed mine from the Guildford Road up the drive to The Infant's ancestral hall, and had turned off to the stables.

'We're having a quiet evening together. Stalky's upstairs changing. Dinner's at 7.15 sharp, because we're hungry. His room's next to yours,' said The Infant, nursing a cobwebbed bottle of Burgundy.

Then I found Lieutenant-Colonel A. L. Corkran, I.A., who borrowed a collar-stud and told me about the East and his Sikh regiment.

'And are your subalterns as good as ever?' I asked.

'Amazin'—simply amazin'! All I've got to do is to find 'em jobs. They keep touchin' their caps to me and askin' for more work. 'Come at me with their tongues hangin' out. *I* used to run the other way at their age.'

'And when they err?' said I. 'I suppose they do sometimes?'

'Then they run to me again to weep with remorse over their virgin peccadilloes. I never cuddled my Colonel when I was in trouble. Lambs—positive lambs!'

'And what do you say to 'em?'

'Talk to 'em like a papa. Tell 'em how I can't

understand it, an' how shocked I am, and how grieved their parents 'll be; and throw in a little about the Army Regulations and the Ten Commandments. 'Makes one feel rather a sweep when one thinks of what one used to do at their age. D'you remember——'

We remembered together till close on seven o'clock. As we went out into the gallery that runs round the big hall, we saw The Infant, below, talking to two deferential well-set-up lads whom I had known, on and off, in the holidays, any time for the last ten years. One of them had a bruised cheek, and the other a weeping left eye.

'Yes, that's the style,' said Stalky below his breath. 'They're brought up on lemon-squash and mobilisation text-books. I say, the girls we knew must have been much better than they pretended they were; for I'll swear it isn't the fathers.'

'But why on earth did you do it?' The Infant was shouting. 'You know what it means nowadays.'

'Well, sir,' said Bobby Trivett, the taller of the two, 'Wontner talks too much, for one thing. He didn't join till he was twenty-three, and, besides that, he used to lecture on tactics in the ante-room. He said Clausewitz was the only tactician, and he illustrated his theories with cigar-ends. He was that sort of chap, sir.'

'And he didn't much care whose cigar-ends they were,' said Eames, who was shorter and pinker.

'And then he *would* talk about the 'Varsity,' said Bobby. 'He got a degree there. And he told us we weren't intellectual. He told the Adjutant so, sir. He was just that kind of chap, sir, if you understand.'

Stalky and I backed behind a tall Japanese jar of chrysanthemums and listened more intently.

'Was all the Mess in it, or only you two?' The Infant demanded, chewing his moustache.

'The Adjutant went to bed, of course, sir, and the Senior Subaltern said he wasn't going to risk his commission—they're awfully down on ragging nowadays in the Service—but the rest of us—er—attended to him,' said Bobby.

'Much?' The Infant asked. The boys smiled deprecatingly.

'Not in the ante-room, sir,' said Eames. 'Then he called us silly children, and went to bed, and we sat up discussin', and I suppose we got a bit above ourselves, and we—er——'

'Went to his quarters and drew him?' The Infant suggested.

'Well, we only asked him to get out of bed, and we put his helmet and sword-belt on for him, and we sung him bits out of the Blue Fairy Book—the cram-book on Army organisation. Oh yes, and then we asked him to drink old Clausewitz's health, as a brother-tactician, in milk-punch and Worcester sauce, and so on. We had to help him a little there. He bites. There wasn't much else that time; but, you know, the War Office is severe on ragging these days.' Bobby stopped with a lop-sided smile.

'And then,' Eames went on, 'then Wontner said we'd done several pounds' worth of damage to his furniture.'

'Oh,' said The Infant, 'he's that kind of man, is he? Does he brush his teeth?'

'Oh yes, he's quite clean all over!' said Trivett; 'but his father's a wealthy barrister.'

'Solicitor,' Eames corrected, 'and so this Mister Wontner is out for our blood. He's going to make a

first-class row about it—appeal to the War Office—court of inquiry—spicy bits in the papers, and songs in the music-halls. He told us so.'

'That's the sort of chap he is,' said Trivett. 'And that means old Dhurrah-bags, our Colonel, 'll be put on half-pay, same as that case in the Scarifungers' Mess; and our Adjutant'll have to exchange, like it was with that fellow in the 73rd Dragoons, and there'll be misery all round. He means making it too hot for us, and his papa'll back him.'

'Yes, that's all very fine,' said The Infant; 'but I left the Service about the time you were born, Bobby. What's it got to do with me?'

'Father told me I was always to go to you when I was in trouble, and you've been awfully good to me since he . . .'

'Better stay to dinner.' The Infant mopped his forehead.

'Thank you very much, but the fact is——' Trivett halted.

'This afternoon, about four, to be exact——' Eames broke in.

'We went over to Wontner's quarters to talk things over. The row only happened last night, and we found him writing letters as hard as he could to his father—getting up his case for the War Office, you know. He read us some of 'em, but I'm not a good judge of style. We tried to ride him off quietly—apologies and so forth—but it was the milk-punch and mayonnaise that defeated us.'

'Yes, he wasn't taking anything except pure revenge,' said Eames.

'He said he'd make an example of the regiment, and

he was particularly glad that he'd landed our Colonel. He told us so. Old Dhurrah-bags don't sympathise with Wontner's tactical lectures. He says Wontner ought to learn manners first, but we thought——' Trivett turned to Eames, who was less a son of the house than himself, Eames' father being still alive.

'Then,' Eames went on, 'he became rather noisome, and we thought we might as well impound the correspondence'—he wrinkled his swelled left eye—'and after that, we got him to take a seat in my car.'

'He was in a sack, you know,' Trivett explained. 'He wouldn't go any other way. But we didn't hurt him.'

'Oh no! His head's sticking out quite clear, and'—Eames rushed the fence—'we've put him in your garage—er *pendente lite*.'

'My garage!' Infant's voice nearly broke with horror.

'Well, father always told me if I was in trouble, Uncle George——'

Bobby's sentence died away as The Infant collapsed on a divan and said no more than, 'Your commissions!' There was a long, long silence.

'What price your latter-day lime-juice subaltern?' I whispered to Stalky behind my hand. His nostrils expanded, and he drummed on the edge of the Japanese jar with his knuckles.

'Confound your father, Bobby!' The Infant groaned. 'Raggin's a criminal offence these days. It isn't as if——'

'Come on,' said Stalky. 'That was my old Line battalion in Egypt. They nearly slung old Dhurrah-bags and me out of the Service in '85 for ragging.' He

descended the stairs and The Infant rolled appealing eyes at him.

'I heard what you youngsters have confessed,' he began; and in his orderly-room voice, which is almost as musical as his singing one, he tongue-lashed those lads in such sort as was a privilege and a revelation to listen to. Till then they had known him almost as a relative—we were all brevet, deputy, or acting uncles to The Infant's friends' brood—a sympathetic elder brother, sound on finance. They had never met Colonel A. L. Corkran in the Chair of Justice. And while he flayed and rent and blistered, and wiped the floor with them, and while they looked for hiding-places and found none on that floor, I remembered (1) the up-ending of 'Dolly' Macshane at Dalhousie, which came perilously near a court-martial on Second-Lieutenant Corkran; (2) the burning of Captain Parmilee's mosquito-curtains on a hot Indian dawn, when the captain slept in his garden, and Lieutenant Corkran, smoking, rode by after a successful whist night at the club; (3) the introduction of an ekka pony, with ekka attached, into a brother captain's tent on a frosty night in Peshawur, and the removal of tent, pole, cot, and captain all wrapped in chilly canvas; (4) the bath that was given to Elliot-Hacker on his own verandah—his lady-love saw it and broke off the engagement, which was what the Mess intended, she being an Eurasian—and the powdering all over of Elliot-Hacker with flour and turmeric from the bazaar.

When he took breath I realised how only Satan can rebuke sin. The good don't know enough.

'Now,' said Stalky, 'get out! No, not out of the house. Go to your rooms.'

'I'll send your dinner, Bobby,' said The Infant. 'Ipps!'

Nothing had ever been known to astonish Ipps, the butler. He entered and withdrew with his charges. After all, he had suffered from Bobby since Bobby's twelfth year.

'They've done everything they could, short of murder,' said The Infant. 'You know what this'll mean for the regiment. It isn't as if we were dealing with Sahibs nowadays.'

'Quite so.' Stalky turned on me. 'Go and release the bagman,' he said.

' 'Tisn't my garage,' I pleaded. 'I'm company. Besides, he'll probably slay me. He's been in the sack for hours.'

'Look here,' Stalky thundered—the years had fallen from us both—'is your—am I commandin' or are you? We've got to pull this thing off somehow or other. Cut over to the garage, make much of him, and bring him over. He's dining with us. Be quick, you dithering ass!'

I was quick enough; but as I ran through the shrubbery I wondered how one extricates the subaltern of the present day from a sack without hurting his feelings. Anciently, one slit the end open, taking off his boots first, and then fled.

Imagine a sumptuously-equipped garage, half-filled by The Infant's cobalt-blue, grey-corded silk limousine and a mud-splashed, cheap, hooded four-seater. In the back-seat of this last, conceive a fiery chestnut head emerging from a long oat-sack; an implacable white face, with blazing eyes and jaws that worked ceaselessly at the loop of the string that was drawn round its neck.

The effect, under the electrics, was that of a demon caterpillar wrathfully spinning its own cocoon.

'Good evening!' I said genially. 'Let me help you out of that.' The head glared. 'We've got 'em,' I went on. 'They came to quite the wrong shop for this sort of game—quite the wrong shop.'

'Game!' said the head. 'We'll see about that. Let me out.'

It was not a promising voice for one so young, and, as usual, I had no knife.

'You've chewed the string so I can't find the knot,' I said as I worked with trembling fingers at the caterpillar's throat. Something untied itself, and Mr. Wontner wriggled out, collarless, tieless, his coat split half down his back, his waistcoat unbuttoned, his watch-chain snapped, his trousers rucked well above the knees.

'Where,' he said grimly, as he pulled them down, 'are Master Trivett and Master Eames?'

'Both arrested, of course,' I replied. 'Sir George'—I gave The Infant's full title as a baronet—'is a Justice of the Peace. He'd be very pleased if you dined with us. There's a room ready for you.' I picked up the sack.

'D'you know,' said Mr. Wontner through his teeth—but the car's bonnet was between us, 'that this looks to me like—I won't say conspiracy *yet*, but uncommonly like a confederacy.'

When injured souls begin to distinguish and qualify, danger is over. So I grew bold.

''Sorry you take it that way,' I said. 'You come here in trouble——'

'My good fool,' he interrupted, with a half-hysterical

snort, 'let me assure you that the trouble will recoil on the other men!'

'As you please,' I went on. 'Anyhow, the chaps who got you into trouble are arrested, and the magistrate who arrested 'em asks you to dinner. Shall I tell him you're walking back to Aldershot?'

He picked some fluff off his waistcoat.

'I'm in no position to dictate terms yet,' he said. 'That will come later. I must probe into this a little further. In the meantime, I accept your invitation without prejudice—if you understand what that means.'

I understood and began to be happy again. Subalterns without prejudices were quite new to me. 'All right,' I replied; 'if you'll go up to the house, I'll turn out the lights.'

He walked off stiffly, while I searched the sack and the car for the impounded correspondence that Bobby had talked of. I found nothing except, as the police reports say, the trace of a struggle. He had kicked half the varnish off the back of the front seat, and had bitten the leather padding where he could reach it. Evidently a purposeful and hard-mouthed young gentleman.

'Well done!' said Stalky at the door. 'So he didn't slay you. Stop laughing. He's talking to The Infant now about depositions. Look here, you're nearest his size. Cut up to your rooms and give Ipps your dinner things and a clean shirt for him.'

'But I haven't got another suit,' I said.

'You! I'm not thinking of you! We've got to conciliate *him*. He's in filthy rags and a filthy temper, and he won't feel decent till he's dressed. You're the sacrifice. Be quick! And clean socks, remember!'

Once more I trotted up to my room, changed into

unseasonable unbrushed grey tweeds, put studs into a clean shirt, dug out fresh socks, handed the whole garniture over to Ipps, and returned to the hall just in time to hear Stalky say, 'I'm a stockbroker, but I have the honour to hold His Majesty's commission in a Territorial battalion.' Then I felt as though I might be beginning to be repaid.

'I have a very high opinion of the Territorials myself,' said Mr. Wontner above a glass of sherry. (Infant never lets us put bitters into anything above twenty years old.) 'But if you had any experience of the Service, you would find that the Average Army Man——'

Here The Infant suggested changing, and Ipps, before whom no human passion can assert itself, led Mr. Wontner away.

'Why the devil did you tell him I was on the Bench?' said Infant wrathfully to me. 'You know I ain't now. Why didn't he stay in his father's office? He's a raging blight!'

'Not a bit of it,' said Stalky cheerfully. 'He's a little shaken and excited. Probably Beetle annoyed him in the garage, but we must overlook that. We've contained him so far, and I'm going to nibble round his outposts at dinner. All you've got to do, Infant, is to remember you're a gentleman in your own house. Don't hop! You'll find it pretty difficult before dinner's over. I don't want to hear anything at all from you, Beetle.'

'But I'm just beginning to like him,' I said. 'Do let me play!'

'Not till I ask you. You'll overdo it. Poor old Dhurrah-bags! A scandal 'ud break him up!'

'But as long as a regiment has no say as to who joins

it, it's bound to rag,' Infant began. 'Why—why, they varnished me when I joined!' He squirmed at the thought of it.

'Don't be owls! We ain't discussing principles! We've got to save the court of inquiry if we can,' said Stalky.

Five minutes later—at 7.45 to be precise—we four sat down to such a dinner as, I hold, only The Infant's cook can produce, with wines worthy of pontifical banquets. A man in the extremity of rage and injured dignity is precisely like a typhoid patient. He asks no questions, accepts what is put before him, and babbles in one key—very often of trifles. But food and drink are the very best of drugs. I think it was Heidsieck Dry Monopole '92—Stalky as usual stuck to Burgundy—that began to unlock Mr. Wontner's heart behind my shirt-front. Me he snubbed throughout, after the Oxford manner, because I had seen him in the sack, and he did not intend me to presume; but to Stalky and The Infant, while I admired the set of my dinner-jacket across his shoulders, he made his plans of revenge very clear indeed. He had even sketched out some of the paragraphs that were to appear in the papers, and if Stalky had allowed me to speak, I would have told him that they were rather neatly phrased.

'You ought to be able to get whackin' damages out of 'em, into the bargain,' said Stalky, after Mr. Wontner had outlined his position legally.

'My de-ah sir,' Mr. Wontner applied himself to his glass, 'it isn't a matter that gentlemen usually discuss, but, I assure you, we Wontners'—he waved a well-kept hand—'do not stand in any need of filthy lucre.' In the next three minutes, we learned exactly what his

father was worth, which, as he pointed out, was a trifle no man of the world dwelt on. Stalky envied aloud, and I delivered my first kick at The Infant's ankle. Thence we drifted to education, and the Average Army Man, and the desolating vacuity—I remember these words—of Army Society, notably among its womenkind. It appeared there was some sort of narrow convention in the Army against mentioning a woman's name at Mess. We were much surprised at this—Stalky would not let me express my surprise—but we took it from Mr. Wontner, who said we might, that it was so. Next he touched on Colonels of the old school, and their cognisance of tactics. Not that he himself pretended to any skill in tactics, but after three years at the 'Varsity —none of us had had a 'Varsity education—a man insensibly contracted the habit of clear thinking. At least, he could automatically co-ordinate his ideas, and the jealousy of these muddle-headed Colonels was inconceivable. We would understand that it was his duty to force on the retirement of his Colonel, who had been in the conspiracy against him; to make his Adjutant resign or exchange; and to give the half-dozen childish subalterns who had vexed his dignity a chance to retrieve themselves in other corps—West African ones, he hoped. For himself, after the case was decided, he proposed to go on living in the regiment, just to prove—for he bore no malice—that times had changed, *nosque mutamur in illis*—if we knew what that meant. Infant had curled his legs out of reach, so I was quite free to return thanks yet once more to Allah for the diversity of His creatures in His adorable world.

And so, by way of an eighty-year-old liqueur brandy,

to tactics and the great General Clausewitz, unknown to the Average Army Man. Here The Infant, at a whisper from Ipps—whose face had darkened like a mulberry while he waited—excused himself and went away, but Stalky, Colonel of Territorials, wanted some tips on tactics. He got them unbrokenly for ten minutes—Wontner and Clausewitz mixed, but Wontner in a film of priceless cognac distinctly on top. When The Infant came back, he renewed his clear-spoken demand that Infant should take his depositions. I supposed this to be a family trait of the Wontners, whom I had been visualising for some time past even to the third generation.

'But, hang it all, they're both asleep!' said Infant, scowling at me. 'Ipps let 'em have the '81 port.'

'Asleep!' said Stalky, rising at once. 'I don't see that makes any difference. As a matter of form, you'd better identify them. I'll show you the way.'

We followed up the white stone side-staircase that leads to the bachelors' wing. Mr. Wontner seemed surprised that the boys were not in the coal-cellar.

'Oh, a chap's assumed to be innocent until he's proved guilty,' said Stalky, mounting step by step. 'How did they get you into the sack, Mr. Wontner?'

'Jumped on me from behind—two to one,' said Mr. Wontner briefly. 'I think I handed each of them something first, but they roped my arms and legs.'

'And did they photograph you in the sack?'

'Good Heavens, no!' Mr. Wontner shuddered.

'That's lucky. Awful thing to live down—a photograph, isn't it?' said Stalky to me as we reached the landing. 'I'm thinking of the newspapers, of course.'

'Oh, but you can easily have sketches in the illus-

trated papers from accounts supplied by eye-witnesses,' I said.

Mr. Wontner turned him round. It was the first time he had honoured me by his notice since our talk in the garage.

'Ah,' said he, 'do you pretend to any special knowledge in these matters?'

'I'm a journalist by profession,' I answered simply but nobly. 'As soon as you're at liberty, I'd like to have your account of the affair.'

Now I thought he would have loved me for this, but he only replied in an uncomfortable, un-coming-on voice, 'Oh, you would, would you?'

'Not if it's any trouble, of course,' I said. 'I can always get their version from the defendants. Do either of 'em draw or sketch at all, Mr. Wontner? Or perhaps your father might——'

Then he said quite hotly, 'I wish you to understand very clearly, my good man, that a gentleman's name can't be dragged through the gutter to bolster up the circulation of your wretched sheet, whatever it may be.'

'It is ——' I named a journal of enormous sales which specialises in scholastic, military, and other scandals. 'I don't know yet what it can't do, Mr. Wontner.'

'I didn't know that I was dealing with a reporter,' said Mr. Wontner.

We were all halted outside a shut door. Ipps had followed us.

'But surely you want it in the papers, don't you?' I urged. 'With a scandal like this, one couldn't, in justice to the democracy, be exclusive. We'd syndicate it here and in the United States. I helped you out of the sack, if you remember.'

'I wish to goodness you'd stop talking!' he snapped, and sat down on a chair. Stalky's hand on my shoulder quietly signalled me out of action, but I felt that my fire had not been misdirected.

'I'll answer for him,' said Stalky to Wontner, in an undertone that dropped to a whisper. I caught—'Not without my leave—dependent on me for market-tips,' and other gratifying tributes to my integrity.

Still Mr. Wontner sat in his chair, and still we waited on him. The Infant's face showed worry and heavy grief; Stalky's, a bright and bird-like interest; mine was hidden behind his shoulders, but on the face of Ipps were written emotions that no butler should cherish towards any guest. Contempt and wrath were the least of them. And Mr. Wontner was looking full at Ipps, as Ipps was looking at him. Mr. Wontner's father, I understood, kept a butler and two footmen.

'D'you suppose they're shamming, in order to get off?' he said at last. Ipps shook his head and noiselessly threw the door open. The boys had finished their dinner and were fast asleep—one on a sofa, one in a long chair—their faces fallen back to the lines of their childhood. They had had a wildish night, a hard day, that ended with a telling-off from an artist, and the assurance they had wrecked their prospects for life. What else should youth do, then, but eat, and drink '81 port, and remember their sorrows no more?

Mr. Wontner looked at them severely, Ipps within easy reach, his hands quite ready. 'Childish,' said Mr. Wontner at last. 'Childish but necessary. Er—have you such a thing as a rope on the premises, and a sack—two sacks and two ropes? I'm afraid I can't resist the

temptation. That man understands, doesn't he, that this is a private matter?'

'That man,' who was me, was off to the basement like one of Infant's own fallow-deer. The stables gave me what I wanted, and coming back with it through a dark passage, I ran squarely into Ipps. 'Go on!' he grunted. 'The minute he lays hands on Master Bobby, Master Bobby's saved. But that person ought to be told how near he came to being assaulted. It was touch-and-go with me all the time from the soup down, I assure you.'

I arrived breathless with the sacks and the ropes. 'They were two to one with me,' said Mr. Wontner, as he took them. 'If they wake——'

'We'll stand by,' Stalky replied. 'Two to one is quite fair.'

But the boys hardly grunted as Mr. Wontner roped first one and then the other. Even when they were slid into the sacks they only mumbled, with rolling heads, through sticky lips and snored on.

'Port?' said Mr. Wontner virtuously.

'Nervous exhaustion. They aren't much more than kids, after all. What's next?' said Stalky.

'I want to take 'em away with me, please.'

Stalky looked at him with respect.

'I'll have my car round in five minutes,' said The Infant. 'Ipps'll help carry 'em downstairs,' and he shook Mr. Wontner by the hand.

We were all perfectly serious till the two bundles were dumped on a divan in the hall, and the boys waked and began to realise what had happened.

'Yah!' said Mr. Wontner, with the simplicity of twelve years old. 'Who's scored now?' And he sat

upon them. The tension broke in a storm of laughter, led, I think, by Ipps.

'Asinine—absolutely asinine!' said Mr. Wontner, with folded arms from his lively chair. But he drank in the flattery and the fellowship of it all with quite a brainless grin, as we rolled and stamped round him, and wiped the tears from our cheeks.

'Hang it!' said Bobby Trivett. 'We're defeated!'

'By tactics, too,' said Eames. 'I didn't think you knew 'em, Clausewitz. It's a fair score. What are you going to do with us?'

'Take you back to Mess,' said Mr. Wontner.

'Not like this?'

'Oh no. Worse—much worse! I haven't begun with you yet. And you thought you'd scored! Yah!'

They had scored beyond their wildest dream. The man in whose hands it lay to shame them, their Colonel, their Adjutant, their Regiment, and their Service, had cast away all shadow of his legal rights for the sake of a common or bear-garden rag—such a rag as if it came to the ears of the authorities, would cost him his commission. They were saved, and their saviour was their equal and their brother. So they chaffed and reviled him as such till he again squashed the breath out of them, and we others laughed louder than they.

'Fall in!' said Stalky when the limousine came round. 'This is the score of the century. I wouldn't miss it for a brigade! We shan't be long, Infant!'

I hurried into a coat.

'Is there any necessity for that reporter-chap to come too?' said Mr. Wontner in an unguarded whisper. 'He isn't dressed for one thing.'

Bobby and Eames wriggled round to look at the reporter, began a joyous bellow, and suddenly stopped.

'What's the matter?' said Wontner with suspicion.

'Nothing,' said Bobby. 'I die happy, Clausewitz. Take me up tenderly.'

We packed into the car, bearing our sheaves with us, and for half an hour, as the cool night-air fanned his thoughtful brow, Mr. Wontner was quite abreast of himself. Though he said nothing unworthy, he triumphed and trumpeted a little loudly over the sacks. I sat between them on the back seat, and applauded him servilely till he reminded me that what I had seen and what he had said was not for publication. I hinted, while the boys plunged with joy inside their trappings, that this might be a matter for arrangement. 'Then a sovereign shan't part us,' said Mr. Wontner cheerily, and both boys fell into lively hysterics. 'I don't see where the joke comes in for you,' said Mr. Wontner. 'I thought it was my little jokelet to-night.'

'No, Clausewitz,' gasped Bobby. 'Some is, but not all. I'll be good now. I'll give you my parole till we get to Mess. I wouldn't be out of this for a fiver.'

'Nor me,' said Eames, and he gave his parole to attempt no escape or evasion.

'Now, I suppose,' said Mr. Wontner largely to Stalky, as we neared the suburbs of Ash, 'you have a good deal of practical joking on the Stock Exchange, haven't you?'

'And when were you on the Stock Exchange, Uncle Leonard?' piped Bobby, while Eames laid his sobbing head on my shoulder.

'I'm sorry,' said Stalky, 'but the fact is, I command a regiment myself when I'm at home. Your Colonel knows me, I think.' He gave his name. Mr. Wontner

seemed to have heard of it. We had to pick Eames off the floor, where he had cast himself from excess of delight.

'Oh, Heavens!' said Mr. Wontner after a long pause. 'What have I done? What haven't I done?' We felt the temperature in the car rise as he blushed.

'You didn't talk tactics, Clausewitz?' said Bobby. 'Oh, say it wasn't tactics, darling!'

'It was,' said Wontner.

Eames was all among our feet again, crying, 'If you don't let me get my arms up, I'll be sick. Let's hear what you said. Tell us.'

But Mr. Wontner turned to Stalky. 'It's no good my begging your pardon, sir, I suppose,' he said.

'Don't you notice 'em,' said Stalky. 'It was a fair rag all round, and anyhow, you two youngsters haven't any right to talk tactics. You've been rolled up, horse, foot, and guns.'

'I'll make a treaty. If you'll let us go and change presently,' said Bobby, 'I'll promise we won't tell about you, Clausewitz. *You* talked tactics to Uncle Len? Old Dhurrah-bags will like that. He don't love you, Claus.'

'If I've made one ass of myself, I shall take extra care to make asses of you!' said Wontner. 'I want to stop, please, at the next milliner's shop on the right. It ought to be close here.'

He evidently knew the country even in the dark, for the car stopped at a brilliantly-lighted millinery establishment, where—it was Saturday evening—a young lady was clearing up the counter. I followed him, as a good reporter should.

'Have you got——' he began. 'Ah, those'll do!'

He pointed to two hairy plush beehive bonnets, one magenta, the other a conscientious electric blue. 'How much, please? I'll take them both, and that bunch of peacock feathers, and that red feather thing.' It was a brilliant crimson-dyed pigeon's wing.

'Now I want some yards of muslin with a nice, fierce pattern, please.' He got it—yellow with black tulips—and returned heavily laden.

'Sorry to have kept you,' said he. 'Now we'll go to my quarters to change and beautify.'

We came to them—opposite a dun waste of parade-ground that might have been Mian Mir—and bugles as they blew and drums as they rolled set heart-strings echoing.

We hoisted the boys out and arranged them on chairs, while Wontner changed into uniform, but stopped when he saw me taking off my jacket.

'What on earth's that for?' said he.

'Because you've been wearing my evening things,' I said. 'I want to get into 'em again, if you don't mind.'

'Then you aren't a reporter?' he said.

'No,' I said, 'but that shan't part us.'

'Oh, hurry!' cried Eames in desperate convulsions. 'We can't stand this much longer. 'Tisn't fair on the young.'

'I'll attend to you in good time,' said Wontner; and when he had made careful toilet, he unwrapped the bonnets, put the peacock's feather into the magenta one, pinned the crimson wing on the blue one, set them daintily on the boys' heads, and bade them admire the effect in his shaving-glass while he ripped the muslin into lengths, bound it first, and draped it artistically afterwards a little below their knees. He finished off with a

gigantic sash-bow, obi fashion. 'Hobble skirts,' he explained to Stalky, who nodded approval.

Next he split open the bottom of each sack so that they could walk, but with very short steps. 'I ought to have got you white stain slippers,' he murmured, 'and I'm sorry there's no rouge.'

'Don't worry on our account, old man—you're doing us proud,' said Bobby from under his hat. 'This beats milk-punch and mayonnaise.'

'Oh, why didn't we think of these things when we had him at our mercy?' Eames wailed. 'Never mind—we'll try it on the next chap. You've a mind, Claus.'

'Now we'll call on 'em at Mess,' said Wontner, as they minced towards the door.

'I think I'll call on your Colonel,' said Stalky. 'He oughtn't to miss this. Your first attempt? I assure you I couldn't have done it better myself. Thank you!' He held out his hand.

'Thank *you*, sir!' said Wontner, shaking it. 'I'm more grateful to you than I can say, and—and I'd like you to believe some time that I'm not quite as big a——'

'Not in the least,' Stalky interrupted. 'If I were writing a confidential report on you, I should put you down as rather adequate. Look after your geishas, or they'll fall!'

We watched the three cross the road and disappear into the shadow of the mess verandah. There was a noise. Then telephone bells rang, a sergeant and a mess waiter charged out, and the noise grew, till at last the Mess was a little noisy.

We came back, ten minutes later, with Colonel Dalziell, who had been taking his sorrows to bed with him.

The ante-room was quite full and visitors were still arriving, but it was possible to hear oneself speak occasionally. Trivett and Eames, in sack and sash, sat side by side on a table, their hats at a ravishing angle, coquettishly twiddling their tied feet. In the intervals of singing 'Put Me Among the Girls,' they sipped whisky-and-soda held to their lips by, I regret to say, a Major. Public opinion seemed to be against allowing them to change their costume till they should have danced in it. Wontner, lying more or less gracefully at the level of the chandelier in the arms of six subalterns, was lecturing on tactics and imploring to be let down, which he was with a run when they realised that the Colonel was there. Then he picked himself up from the sofa and said: 'I want to apologise, sir, to you and the Mess for having been such an ass ever since I joined!'

This was when the noise began.

Seeing the night promised to be wet, Stalky and I went home again in The Infant's car. It was some time since we had tasted the hot air that lies between the cornice and the ceiling of crowded rooms.

After half an hour's silence, Stalky said to me: 'I don't know what you've been doing, but I believe I've been weepin'. Would you put that down to Burgundy or senile decay?'

THE CHILDREN

These were our children who died for our lands: they were dear in our sight.
We have only the memory left of their home-treasured sayings and laughter.
The price of our loss shall be paid to our hands, not another's hereafter.
Neither the Alien nor Priest shall decide on it. That is our right.
But who shall return us the children ?

At the hour the Barbarian chose to disclose his pretences,
And raged against Man, they engaged, on the breasts that they bared for us,
The first felon-stroke of the sword he had long-time prepared for us—
Their bodies were all our defence while we wrought our defences.

They bought us anew with their blood, forbearing to blame us,
Those hours which we had not made good when the Judgment o'ercame us.

They believed us and perished for it. Our state-craft, our learning
Delivered them bound to the Pit and alive to the burning
Whither they mirthfully hastened as jostling for honour.
Not since her birth has our Earth seen such worth loosed upon her.

Nor was their agony brief, or once only imposed on them.
The wounded, the war-spent, the sick received no exemption:
Being cured they returned and endured and achieved our redemption,
Hopeless themselves of relief, till Death, marvelling, closed on them.

That flesh we had nursed from the first in all cleanness was given
To corruption unveiled and assailed by the malice of Heaven—
By the heart-shaking jests of Decay where it lolled on the wires—
To be blanched or gay-painted by fumes—to be cindered by fires—
To be senselessly tossed and retossed in stale mutilation
From crater to crater. For this we shall take expiation.
But who shall return us our children ?

THE DOG HERVEY

(April, 1914)

MY friend Attley, who would give away his own head if you told him you had lost yours, was giving away a six-months-old litter of Bettina's pups, and half-a-dozen women were in raptures at the show on Mittleham lawn.

We picked by lot. Mrs. Godfrey drew first choice; her married daughter, second. I was third, but waived my right because I was already owned by Malachi, Bettina's full brother, whom I had brought over in the car to visit his nephews and nieces, and he would have slain them all if I had taken home one. Milly, Mrs. Godfrey's younger daughter, pounced on my rejection with squeals of delight, and Attley turned to a dark, sallow-skinned, slack-mouthed girl, who had come over for tennis, and invited her to pick. She put on a pair of pince-nez that made her look like a camel, knelt clumsily, for she was long from the hip to the knee, breathed hard, and considered the last couple.

'I think I'd like that sandy-pied one,' she said.

'Oh, not him, Miss Sichliffe!' Attley cried. 'He was overlaid or had sunstroke or something. They call him The Looney in the kennels. Besides, he squints.'

'I think that's rather fetching,' she answered. Neither Malachi nor I had ever seen a squinting dog before.

'That's chorea—St. Vitus's dance,' Mrs. Godfrey put in. 'He ought to have been drowned.'

'But I like his cast of countenance,' the girl persisted.

'He doesn't look a good life,' I said, 'but perhaps he can be patched up.' Miss Sichliffe turned crimson; I saw Mrs. Godfrey exchange a glance with her married daughter, and knew I had said something which would have to be lived down.

'Yes,' Miss Sichliffe went on, her voice shaking, 'he isn't a good life, but perhaps I can—patch him up. Come here, sir.' The misshapen beast lurched towards her, squinting down his own nose till he fell over his own toes. Then, luckily, Bettina ran across the lawn and reminded Malachi of their puppyhood. All that family are as queer as Dick's hatband, and fight like man and wife. I had to separate them, and Mrs. Godfrey helped me till they retired under the rhododendrons and had it out in silence.

'D'you know what that girl's father was?' Mrs. Godfrey asked.

'No,' I replied. 'I loathe her for her own sake. She breathes through her mouth.'

'He was a retired doctor,' she explained. 'He used to pick up stormy young men in the repentant stage, take them home, and patch them up till they were sound enough to be insured. Then he insured them heavily, and let them out into the world again—with an appetite. Of course, no one knew him while he was alive, but he left pots of money to his daughter.'

'Strictly legitimate—highly respectable,' I said. 'But what a life for the daughter!'

'Mustn't it have been! *Now* d'you realise what you said just now?'

'Perfectly; and now you've made me quite happy, shall we go back to the house?'

When we reached it they were all inside, sitting on committee of names.

'What shall you call yours?' I heard Milly ask Miss Sichliffe.

'Harvey,' she replied—'Harvey's Sauce, you know. He's going to be quite saucy when I've'—she saw Mrs. Godfrey and me coming through the French window—'when he's stronger.'

Attley, the well-meaning man, to make me feel at ease, asked what I thought of the name.

'Oh, splendid,' I said at random. 'H with an A, A with an R, R with a——'

'But that's Little Bingo,' some one said, and they all laughed.

Miss Sichliffe, her hands joined across her long knees, drawled, 'You ought always to verify your quotations.'

It was not a kindly thrust, but something in the word 'quotation' set the automatic side of my brain at work on some shadow of a word or phrase that kept itself out of memory's reach as a cat sits just beyond a dog's jump. When I was going home, Miss Sichliffe came up to me in the twilight, the pup on a leash, swinging her big shoes at the end of her tennis-racket.

''Sorry,' she said in her thick schoolboy-like voice. 'I'm sorry for what I said to you about verifying quotations. I didn't know you well enough and—anyhow, I oughtn't to have.'

'But you were quite right about Little Bingo,' I answered. 'The spelling ought to have reminded me.'

'Yes, of course. It's the spelling,' she said, and slouched off with the pup sliding after her. Once again

my brain began to worry after something that would have meant something if it had been properly spelled. I confided my trouble to Malachi on the way home, but Bettina had bitten him in four places, and he was busy.

Weeks later, Attley came over to see me, and before his car stopped Malachi let me know that Bettina was sitting beside the chauffeur. He greeted her by the scruff of the neck as she hopped down; and I greeted Mrs. Godfrey, Attley, and a big basket.

'You've got to help me,' said Attley tiredly. We took the basket into the garden, and there staggered out the angular shadow of a sandy-pied, broken-haired terrier, with one imbecile and one delirious ear, and two most hideous squints. Bettina and Malachi, already at grips on the lawn, saw him, let go, and fled in opposite directions.

'Why have you brought that fetid hound here?' I demanded.

'Harvey? For you to take care of,' said Attley. 'He's had distemper, but *I*'m going abroad.'

'Take him with you. I won't have him. He's mentally afflicted.'

'Look here,' Attley almost shouted, 'do I strike you as a fool?'

'Always,' said I.

'Well, then, if you say so, and Ella says so, that proves I ought to go abroad.'

'Will's wrong, quite wrong,' Mrs. Godfrey interrupted; 'but you must take the pup.'

'My dear boy, my dear boy, don't you ever give anything to a woman,' Attley snorted.

Bit by bit I got the story out of them in the quiet

garden (never a sign from Bettina and Malachi), while Harvey stared me out of countenance, first with one cuttlefish eye and then with the other.

It appeared that, a month after Miss Sichliffe took him, the dog Harvey developed distemper. Miss Sichliffe had nursed him herself for some time; then she carried him in her arms the two miles to Mittleham, and wept—actually wept—at Attley's feet, saying that Harvey was all she had or expected to have in this world, and Attley must cure him. Attley, being by wealth, position, and temperament guardian to all lame dogs, had put everything aside for this unsavoury job, and, he asserted, Miss Sichliffe had virtually lived with him ever since.

'She went home at night, of course,' he exploded, 'but the rest of the time she simply infested the premises. Goodness knows, I'm not particular, but it was a scandal. Even the servants! . . . Three and four times a day, and notes in between, to know how the beast was. Hang it all, don't laugh! And wanting to send me flowers and goldfish. Do I look as if I wanted goldfish? Can't you two stop for a minute?' (Mrs. Godfrey and I were clinging to each other for support.) 'And it isn't as if I was—was so alluring a personality, is it?'

Attley commands more trust, goodwill, and affection than most men, for he is that rare angel, an absolutely unselfish bachelor, content to be run by contending syndicates of zealous friends. His situation seemed desperate, and I told him so.

'Instant flight is your only remedy,' was my verdict. 'I'll take care of both your cars while you're away, and you can send me over all the greenhouse fruit.'

But why should I be chased out of my house by a she-dromedary?' he wailed.

'Oh, stop! Stop!' Mrs. Godfrey sobbed. 'You're both wrong. I admit you're right, but I *know* you're wrong.'

'Three *and* four times a day,' said Attley, with an awful countenance. 'I'm not a vain man, but—look here, Ella, I'm not sensitive, I hope, but if you persist in making a joke of it——'

'Oh, be quiet!' she almost shrieked. 'D'you imagine for one instant that your friends would ever let Mittleham pass out of their hands? I quite agree it is unseemly for a grown girl to come to Mittleham at all hours of the day and night——'

'I told you she went home o' nights,' Attley growled.

'Specially if she goes home o' nights. Oh, but think of the life she must have led, Will!'

'I'm not interfering with it; only she must leave me alone.'

'She may want to patch you up and insure you,' I suggested.

'D'you know what *you* are?' Mrs. Godfrey turned on me with the smile I have feared for the last quarter of a century. 'You're the nice, kind, wise, doggy friend. You don't know how wise and nice you are supposed to be. Will has sent Harvey to you to complete the poor angel's convalescence. You know all about dogs, or Will wouldn't have done it. He's written her that. You're too far off for her to make daily calls on you. P'r'aps she'll drop in two or three times a week, and write on other days. But it doesn't matter what she does, because you don't own Mittleham, don't you see?'

I told her I saw most clearly.

'Oh, you'll get over that in a few days,' Mrs. Godfrey countered. 'You're the sporting, responsible, doggy friend who——'

'He used to look at me like that at first,' said Attley, with a visible shudder, 'but he gave it up after a bit. It's only because you're new to him.'

'But, confound you! he's a ghoul——' I began.

'And when he gets quite well, you'll send him back to her direct with your love, and she'll give you some pretty four-tailed goldfish,' said Mrs. Godfrey, rising. 'That's all settled. Car, please. We're going to Brighton to lunch together.'

They ran before I could get into my stride, so I told the dog Harvey what I thought of them and his mistress. He never shifted his position, but stared at me, an intense, lopsided stare, eye after eye. Malachi came along when he had seen his sister off, and from a distance counselled me to drown the brute and consort with gentlemen again. But the dog Harvey never even cocked his cockable ear.

And so it continued as long as he was with me. Where I sat, he sat and stared; where I walked, he walked beside, head stiffly slewed over one shoulder in single-barrelled contemplation of me. He never gave tongue, never closed in for a caress, seldom let me stir a step alone. And, to my amazement, Malachi, who suffered no stranger to live within our gates, saw this gaunt, growing, green-eyed devil wipe him out of my service and company without a whimper. Indeed, one would have said the situation interested him, for he would meet us returning from grim walks together, and look alternately at Harvey and at me with the same quiver-

ing interest that he showed at the mouth of a rat-hole. Outside these inspections, Malachi withdrew himself as only a dog or a woman can.

Miss Sichliffe came over after a few days (luckily I was out) with some elaborate story of paying calls in the neighbourhood. She sent me a note of thanks next day. I was reading it when Harvey and Malachi entered and disposed themselves as usual, Harvey close up to stare at me, Malachi half under the sofa, watching us both. Out of curiosity I returned Harvey's stare, then pulled his lopsided head on to my knee, and took his eye for several minutes. Now, in Malachi's eye I can see at any hour all that there is of the normal decent dog, flecked here and there with that strained half-soul which man's love and association have added to his nature. But with Harvey the eye was perplexed, as a tortured man's. Only by looking far into its deeps could one make out the spirit of the proper animal, beclouded and cowering beneath some unfair burden.

Leggatt, my chauffeur, came in for orders.

'How d'you think Harvey's coming on?' I said, as I rubbed the brute's gulping neck. The vet had warned me of the possibilities of spinal trouble following distemper.

'He ain't *my* fancy,' was the reply. 'But *I* don't question his comings and goings so long as I 'aven't to sit alone in a room with him.'

'Why? He's as meek as Moses,' I said.

'He fair gives me the creeps. P'r'aps he'll go out in fits.'

But Harvey, as I wrote his mistress from time to time, throve, and when he grew better, would play by himself grisly games of spying, walking up, hailing, and

chasing another dog. From these he would break off of a sudden and return to his normal stiff gait, with the air of one who had forgotten some matter of life and death, which could be reached only by staring at me. I left him one evening posturing with the unseen on the lawn, and went inside to finish some letters for the post. I must have been at work nearly an hour, for I was going to turn on the lights, when I felt there was somebody in the room whom, the short hairs at the back of my neck warned me, I was not in the least anxious to face. There was a mirror on the wall. As I lifted my eyes to it I saw the dog Harvey reflected near the shadow by the closed door. He had reared himself full-length on his hind legs, his head a little one side to clear a sofa between us, and he was looking at me. The face, with its knitted brows and drawn lips, was the face of a dog, but the look, for the fraction of time that I caught it, was human—wholly and horribly human. When the blood in my body went forward again he had dropped to the floor, and was merely studying me in his usual one-eyed fashion. Next day I returned him to Miss Sichliffe. I would not have kept him another day for the wealth of Asia, or even Ella Godfrey's approval.

Miss Sichliffe's house I discovered to be a mid-Victorian mansion of peculiar villainy even for its period, surrounded by gardens of conflicting colours, all dazzling with glass and fresh paint on ironwork. Striped blinds, for it was a blazing autumn morning, covered most of the windows, and a voice sang to the piano an almost forgotten song of Jean Ingelow's—

Methought that the stars were blinking bright,
And the old brig's sails unfurled—

Down came the loud pedal, and the unrestrained cry swelled out across a bed of tritomas consuming in their own fires—

> When I said I will sail to my love this night
> On the other side of the world.

I have no music, but the voice drew. I waited till the end:

> Oh, maid most dear, I am not here
> I have no place apart—
> No dwelling more on sea or shore,
> But only in thy heart.

It seemed to me a poor life that had no more than that to do at eleven o'clock of a Tuesday forenoon. Then Miss Sichliffe suddenly lumbered through a French window in clumsy haste, her brows contracted against the light.

'Well?' she said, delivering the word like a spear-thrust, with the full weight of a body behind it.

'I've brought Harvey back at last,' I replied. 'Here he is.'

But it was at me she looked, not at the dog who had cast himself at her feet—looked as though she would have fished my soul out of my breast on the instant.

'Wha—what did you think of him? What did *you* make of him?' she panted. I was too taken aback for the moment to reply. Her voice broke as she stooped to the dog at her knees. 'O Harvey, Harvey! You utterly worthless old devil!' she cried, and the dog cringed and abased himself in servility that one could scarcely bear to look upon. I made to go.

'Oh, but please, you mustn't!' She tugged at the

car's side. 'Wouldn't you like some flowers or some orchids? We've really splendid orchids, and'—she clasped her hands—'there are Japanese goldfish—real Japanese goldfish, with four tails. If you don't care for 'em, perhaps your friends or somebody—oh, please!'

Harvey had recovered himself, and I realised that this woman beyond the decencies was fawning on me as the dog had fawned on her.

'Certainly,' I said, ashamed to meet her eye. 'I'm lunching at Mittleham, but——'

'There's plenty of time,' she entreated. 'What do *you* think of Harvey?'

'He's a queer beast,' I said, getting out. 'He does nothing but stare at me.'

'Does he stare at you all the time he's with you?'

'Always. He's doing it now. Look!'

We had halted. Harvey had sat down, and was staring from one to the other with a weaving motion of the head.

'He'll do that all day,' I said. 'What is it, Harvey?'

'Yes, what *is* it, Harvey?' she echoed. The dog's throat twitched, his body stiffened and shook as though he were going to have a fit. Then he came back with a visible wrench to his unwinking watch.

''Always so?' she whispered.

'Always,' I replied, and told her something of his life with me. She nodded once or twice, and in the end led me into the house.

There were unaging pitch-pine doors of Gothic design in it; there were inlaid marble mantelpieces and cut-steel fenders; there were stupendous wall-papers, and octagonal, medallioned Wedgewood what-nots, and black-and-gilt Austrian images holding candelabra,

with every other refinement that Art had achieved or wealth had bought between 1851 and 1878. And everything reeked of varnish.

'Now!' she opened a baize door, and pointed down a long corridor flanked with more Gothic doors. 'This was where we used to—to patch 'em up. You've heard of us. Mrs. Godfrey told you in the garden the day I got Harvey given me. I'—she drew in her breath—'I live here by myself, and I have a very large income. Come back, Harvey.'

He had tiptoed down the corridor, as rigid as ever, and was sitting outside one of the shut doors. 'Look here!' she said, and planted herself squarely in front of me. 'I tell you this because you—you've patched up Harvey, too. Now, I want you to remember that my name is Moira. Mother calls me Marjorie because it's more refined; but my real name is Moira, and I am in my thirty-fourth year.'

'Very good,' I said. 'I'll remember all that.'

'Thank you.' Then with a sudden swoop into the humility of an abashed boy—' 'Sorry if I haven't said the proper things. You see—there's Harvey looking at us again. Oh, I want to say—if ever you want anything in the way of orchids or goldfish or—or anything else that would be useful to you, you've only to come to me for it. Under the will I'm perfectly independent, and we're a long-lived family, worse luck!' She looked at me, and her face worked like glass behind driven flame. 'I may reasonably expect to live another fifty years,' she said.

'Thank you, Miss Sichliffe,' I replied. 'If I want anything, you may be sure I'll come to you for it.' She nodded. 'Now I must get over to Mittleham,' I said.

'Mr. Attley will ask you all about this.' For the first time she laughed aloud. 'I'm afraid I frightened him nearly out of the county. I didn't think, of course. But I dare say he knows by this time he was wrong. Say good-bye to Harvey.'

'Good-bye, old man,' I said. 'Give me a farewell stare, so we shall know each other when we meet again.'

The dog looked up, then moved slowly towards me, and stood, head bowed to the floor, shaking in every muscle as I patted him; and when I turned, I saw him crawl back to her feet.

That was not a good preparation for the rampant boy-and-girl-dominated lunch at Mittleham, which, as usual, I found in possession of everybody except the owner.

'But what did the dromedary say when you brought her beast back?' Attley demanded.

'The usual polite things,' I replied. 'I'm posing as the nice doggy friend nowadays.'

'I don't envy you. She's never darkened my doors, thank goodness, since I left Harvey at your place. I suppose she'll run about the county now swearing you cured him. That's a woman's idea of gratitude.' Attley seemed rather hurt, and Mrs. Godfrey laughed.

'That proves you were right about Miss Sichliffe, Ella,' I said. 'She had no designs on anybody.'

'I'm always right in these matters. But didn't she even offer you a goldfish?'

'Not a thing,' said I. 'You know what an old maid's like where her precious dog's concerned.' And though I have tried vainly to lie to Ella Godfrey for many years, I believe that in this case I succeeded.

When I turned into our drive that evening, Leggatt observed half aloud:

'I'm glad Zvengali's back where he belongs. It's time our Mike had a look in.'

Sure enough, there was Malachi back again in spirit as well as flesh, but still with that odd air of expectation he had picked up from Harvey.

. . . . . .

It was in January that Attley wrote me that Mrs. Godfrey, wintering in Madeira with Milly, her unmarried daughter, had been attacked with something like enteric; that the hotel, anxious for its good name, had thrust them both out into a cottage annexe; that he was off with a nurse, and that I was not to leave England till I heard from him again. In a week he wired that Milly was down as well, and that I must bring out two more nurses, with suitable delicacies.

Within seventeen hours I had got them all aboard the Cape boat, and had seen the women safely collapsed into sea-sickness. The next few weeks were for me, as for the invalids, a low delirium, clouded with fantastic memories of Portuguese officials trying to tax calves'-foot jelly; voluble doctors insisting that true typhoid was unknown in the island; nurses who had to be exercised, taken out of themselves, and returned on the tick of change of guard; night slides down glassy, cobbled streets, smelling of sewage and flowers, between walls whose every stone and patch Attley and I knew; vigils in stucco verandahs, watching the curve and descent of great stars or drawing auguries from the break of dawn; insane interludes of gambling at the local Casino, where we won heaps of unconsoling silver; blasts of steamers arriving and departing in the roads; help offered by total strangers, grabbed at or thrust aside; the long

nightmare crumbling back into sanity one forenoon under a vine-covered trellis, where Attley sat hugging a nurse, while the others danced a noiseless, neat-footed break-down never learned at the Middlesex Hospital. At last, as the tension came out all over us in aches and tingles that we put down to the country wine, a vision of Mrs. Godfrey, her grey hair turned to spun-glass, but her eyes triumphant over the shadow of retreating death beneath them, with Milly, enormously grown, and clutching life back to her young breast, both stretched out on cane chairs, clamouring for food.

In this ungirt hour there imported himself into our life a youngish-looking middle-aged man of the name of Shend, with a blurred face and deprecating eyes. He said he had gambled with me at the Casino, which was no recommendation, and I remember that he twice gave me a basket of champagne and liqueur brandy for the invalids, which a sailor in a red-tasselled cap carried up to the cottage for me at 3 A.M. He turned out to be the son of some merchant prince in the oil and colour line, and the owner of a four-hundred-ton steam yacht, into which, at his gentle insistence, we later shifted our camp, staff, and equipage, Milly weeping with delight to escape from the horrible cottage. There we lay off Funchal for weeks, while Shend did miracles of luxury and attendance through deputies, and never once asked how his guests were enjoying themselves. Indeed, for several days at a time we would see nothing of him. He was, he said, subject to malaria. Giving as they do with both hands, I knew that Attley and Mrs. Godfrey could take nobly; but I never met a man who so nobly gave and so nobly received thanks as Shend did.

'Tell us why you have been so unbelievably kind to

us gipsies' Mrs. Godfrey said to him one day on deck.

He looked up from a diagram of some Thames-mouth shoals which he was explaining to me, and answered with his gentle smile:

'I will. It's because it makes me happy—it makes me more than happy—to be with you. It makes me comfortable. You know how selfish men are? If a man feels comfortable all over with certain people, he'll bore them to death, just like a dog. You always make me feel as if pleasant things were going to happen to me.'

'Haven't any ever happened before?' Milly asked.

'This is the most pleasant thing that has happened to me in ever so many years,' he replied. 'I feel like the man in the Bible, "It's good for me to be here." Generally, I don't feel that it's good for me to be anywhere in particular.' Then, as one begging a favour. 'You'll let me come home with you—in the same boat, I mean? I'd take you back in this thing of mine, and that would save you packing your trunks, but she's too lively for spring work across the Bay.'

We booked our berths, and when the time came, he wafted us and ours aboard the Southampton mail-boat with the pomp of plenipotentiaries and the precision of the Navy. Then he dismissed his yacht, and became an inconspicuous passenger in a cabin opposite to mine, on the port side.

We ran at once into early British spring weather, followed by sou'west gales. Mrs. Godfrey, Milly, and the nurses disappeared. Attley stood it out, visibly yellowing, till the next meal, and followed suit, and Shend and I had the little table all to ourselves. I found him even more attractive when the women were

away. The natural sweetness of the man, his voice, and bearing all fascinated me, and his knowledge of practical seamanship (he held an extra master's certificate) was a real joy. We sat long in the empty saloon and longer in the smoking-room, making dashes downstairs over slippery decks at the eleventh hour.

It was on Friday night, just as I was going to bed, that he came into my cabin, after cleaning his teeth, which he did half a dozen times a day.

'I say,' he began hurriedly, 'do you mind if I come in here for a little? I'm a bit edgy.' I must have shown surprise. 'I'm ever so much better about liquor than I used to be, but—it's the whisky in the suitcase that throws me. For God's sake, old man, don't go back on me to-night! Look at my hands!'

They were fairly jumping at the wrists. He sat down on a trunk that had slid out with the roll. We had reduced speed, and were surging in confused seas that pounded on the black port-glasses. The night promised to be a pleasant one!

'You understand, of course, don't you?' he chattered.

'Oh yes,' I said cheerily; 'but how about——'

'No, no; on no account the doctor. 'Tell a doctor, tell the whole ship. Besides, I've only got a touch of 'em. You'd never have guessed it, would you? The tooth-wash does the trick. I'll give you the prescription.'

'I'll send a note to the doctor for a prescription, shall I?' I suggested.

'Right! I put myself unreservedly in your hands. 'Fact is, I always did. I said to myself—'sure I don't bore you?—the minute I saw you, I said, "Thou art the man."' He repeated the phrase as he picked at his knees. 'All the same, you can take it from me that

the ewe-lamb business is a rotten bad one. I don't care how unfaithful the shepherd may be. Drunk or sober, 'tisn't cricket.'

A surge of the trunk threw him across the cabin as the steward answered my bell. I wrote my requisition to the doctor while Shend was struggling to his feet.

'What's wrong?' he began. 'Oh, I know. We're slowing for soundings off Ushant. It's about time, too. You'd better ship the dead-lights when you come back, Matchem. It'll save you waking us later. This sea's going to get up when the tide turns. That'll show you,' he said as the man left, 'that I am to be trusted. You—you'll stop me if I say anything I shouldn't, won't you?'

'Talk away,' I replied, 'if it makes you feel better.'

'That's it; you've hit it exactly. You always make me feel better. I can rely on you. It's awkward soundings but you'll see me through it. We'll defeat him yet. . . . I may be an utterly worthless devil, but I'm not a brawler. . . . I told him so at breakfast. I said, "Doctor, I detest brawling, but if ever you allow that girl to be insulted again as Clements insulted her, I will break your neck with my own hands." You think I was right?'

'Absolutely,' I agreed.

'Then we needn't discuss the matter any further. That man was a murderer in intention—outside the law, you understand, as it was then. They've changed it since—but he never deceived *me*. I told him so. I said to him at the time, "I don't know what price you're going to put on my head, but if ever you allow Clements to insult her again, you'll never live to claim it."'

'And what did he do?' I asked, to carry on the conversation, for Matchem entered with the bromide.

'Oh, crumpled up at once. 'Lead still going, Matchem?'

'I 'aven't 'eard,' said that faithful servant of the Union-Castle Company.

'Quite right. Never alarm the passengers. Ship the dead-light, will you?' Matchem shipped it, for we were rolling very heavily. There were tramplings and gull-like cries from on deck. Shend looked at me with a mariner's eye.

'That's nothing,' he said protectingly.

'Oh, it's all right for you,' I said, jumping at the idea. '*I* haven't an extra master's certificate. I'm only a passenger. I confess it funks me.'

Instantly his whole bearing changed to answer the appeal.

'My dear fellow, it's as simple as houses. We're hunting for sixty-five fathom water. Anything short of sixty, with a sou'west wind means—but I'll get my Channel Pilot out of my cabin and give you the general idea. I'm only too grateful to do anything to put your mind at ease.'

And so, perhaps, for another hour—he declined the drink—Channel Pilot in hand, he navigated us round Ushant, and at my request up-channel to Southampton, light by light, with explanations and reminiscences. I professed myself soothed at last, and suggested bed.

'In a second,' said he. 'Now, you wouldn't think, would you'—he glanced off the book towards my wildly swaying dressing-gown on the door—'that I've been seeing things for the last half-hour? 'Fact is, I'm just on the edge of 'em, skating on thin ice round the corner—nor'east as near as nothing—where that dog's looking at me.'

'What's the dog like?' I asked.

'Ah, that *is* comforting of you! Most men walk through 'em to show me they aren't real. As if I didn't know! But *you*'re different. Anybody could see that with half an eye.' He stiffened and pointed. 'Damn it all! The dog sees it too with half an—— Why, he knows you! Knows you perfectly. D'you know *him ?*'

'How can I tell if he isn't real?' I insisted.

'But you can! *You*'re all right. I saw that from the first. Don't go back on me now or I shall go to pieces like the *Drummond Castle*. I beg your pardon, old man; but, you see, you *do* know the dog. I'll prove it. What's that dog doing? Come on! *You* know.' A tremor shook him, and he put his hand on my knee, and whispered with great meaning: 'I'll letter or halve it with you. There! You begin.'

'S,' said I to humour him, for a dog would most likely be standing or sitting, or may be scratching or sniffing or staring.

'Q,' he went on, and I could feel the heat of his shaking hand.

'U,' said I. There was no other letter possible; but I was shaking too.

'I.'

'N.'

'T-i-n-g,' he ran out. 'There! That proves it. I knew you knew him. You don't know what a relief that is. Between ourselves, old man, he—he's been turning up lately a—a damn sight more often than I cared for. And a squinting dog—a dog that squints! I mean that's a bit *too* much. Eh? What?' He gulped and half rose, and I thought that the full tide of delirium would be on him in another sentence.

'Not a bit of it,' I said as a last chance, with my hand over the bellpush. 'Why, you've just proved that I know him; so there are two of us in the game, anyhow.'

'By Jove! that *is* an idea! Of course there are. I knew you'd see me through. We'll defeat them yet. Hi, pup! . . . He's gone. Absolutely disappeared!' He sighed with relief, and I caught the lucky moment.

'Good business! I expect he only came to have a look at me,' I said. 'Now, get this drink down and turn in to the lower bunk.'

He obeyed, protesting that he could not inconvenience me, and in the midst of apologies sank into a dead sleep. I expected a wakeful night, having a certain amount to think over; but no sooner had I scrambled into the top-bunk than sleep came on me like a wave from the other side of the world.

In the morning there were apologies, which we got over at breakfast before our party were about.

'I suppose—after this—well, I don't blame you. I'm rather a lonely chap, though.' His eyes lifted dog-like across the table.

'Shend,' I replied, 'I'm not running a Sunday school. You're coming home with me in my car as soon as we land.'

'That is kind of you—kinder than you think.'

'That's because you're a little jumpy still. Now, I don't want to mix up in your private affairs——'

'But I'd like you to,' he interrupted.

'Then, would you mind telling me the Christian name of a girl who was insulted by a man called Clements?'

'Moira,' he whispered; and just then Mrs. Godfrey and Milly came to table with their shore-going hats on.

We did not tie up till noon, but the faithful Leggatt had intrigued his way down to the dock-edge, and beside him sat Malachi, wearing his collar of gold, or Leggatt makes it look so, as eloquent as Demosthenes. Shend flinched a little when he saw him. We packed Mrs. Godfrey and Milly into Attley's car—they were going with him to Mittleham, of course—and drew clear across the railway lines to find England all lit and perfumed for spring. Shend sighed with happiness.

'D'you know,' he said, 'if—if you'd chucked me—I should have gone down to my cabin after breakfast and cut my throat. And now—it's like a dream—a good dream, you know.'

We lunched with the other three at Romsey. Then I sat in front for a little while to talk to my Malachi. When I looked back, Shend was solidly asleep, and stayed so for the next two hours, while Leggatt chased Attley's fat Daimler along the green-speckled hedges. He woke up when we said good-bye at Mittleham, with promises to meet again very soon.

'And I hope,' said Mrs. Godfrey, 'that everything pleasant will happen to you.'

'Heaps and heaps—all at once,' cried long, weak Milly, waving her wet handkerchief.

'I've just got to look in at a house near here for a minute to inquire about a dog,' I said, 'and then we will go home.'

'I used to know this part of the world,' he replied, and said no more till Leggatt shot past the lodge at the Sichliffes's gate. Then I heard him gasp.

Miss Sichliffe, in a green waterproof, an orange jersey, and a pinkish leather hat, was working on a bulb-border. She straightened herself as the car stopped, and breathed

hard. Shend got out and walked towards her. They shook hands, turned round together, and went into the house. Then the dog Harvey pranced out corkily from under the lee of a bench. Malachi, with one joyous swoop, fell on him as an enemy and an equal. Harvey, for his part, freed from all burden whatsoever except the obvious duty of a man-dog on his own ground, met Malachi without reserve or remorse, and with six months' additional growth to come and go on.

'Don't check 'em!' cried Leggatt, dancing round the flurry. 'They've both been saving up for each other all this time. It'll do 'em worlds of good.'

'Leggatt,' I said, 'will you take Mr. Shend's bag and suitcase up to the house and put them down just inside the door? Then we will go on.'

So I enjoyed the finish alone. It was a dead heat, and they licked each other's jaws in amity till Harvey, one imploring eye on me, leaped into the front seat, and Malachi backed his appeal. It was theft, but I took him, and we talked all the way home of r-rats and r-rabbits and bones and baths and the other basic facts of life. That evening after dinner they slept before the fire, with their warm chins across the hollows of my ankles—to each chin an ankle—till I kicked them upstairs to bed.

I was not at Mittleham when she came over to announce her engagement, but I heard of it when Mrs. Godfrey and Attley came, forty miles an hour, over to me, and Mrs. Godfrey called me names of the worst for suppression of information.

'As long as it wasn't me, I don't care,' said Attley.

'I believe you knew it all along,' Mrs. Godfrey re-

peated. 'Else what made you drive that man literally into her arms?'

'To ask after the dog Harvey,' I replied.

'Then, what's the beast doing here?' Attley demanded, for Malachi and the dog Harvey were deep in a council of the family with Bettina, who was being outargued.

'Oh, Harvey seemed to think himself *de trop* where he was,' I said. 'And she hasn't sent after him. You'd better save Bettina before they kill her.'

'There's been enough lying about that dog,' said Mrs. Godfrey to me. 'If he wasn't born in lies, he was baptized in 'em. D'you know why she called him Harvey? It only occurred to me in those dreadful days when I was ill, and one can't keep from thinking, and thinks everything. D'you know your Boswell? What did Johnson say about Hervey—with an e?'

'Oh, *that's* it, is it?' I cried incautiously. 'That was why I ought to have verified my quotations. The spelling defeated me. Wait a moment, and it will come back. Johnson said: "He was a vicious man,"' I began.

'"But very kind to me,"' Mrs. Godfrey prompted. Then, both together, '"If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him."'

'So you *were* mixed up in it. At any rate, you had your suspicions from the first? Tell me,' she said.

'Ella,' I said, 'I don't know anything rational or reasonable about any of it. It was all—all woman-work, and it scared me horribly.'

'Why?' she asked.

That was six years ago. I have written this tale to let her know—wherever she may be.

THE COMFORTERS

Until thy feet have trod the Road
  Advise not wayside folk,
Nor till thy back has borne the Load
  Break in upon the Broke.

Chase not with undesired largesse
  Of sympathy the heart
Which, knowing her own bitterness,
  Presumes to dwell apart.

Employ not that glad hand to raise
  The God-forgotten head
To Heaven, and all the neighbours' gaze—
  Cover thy mouth instead.

The quivering chin, the bitten lip,
  The cold and sweating brow,
Later may yearn for fellowship—
  Not now, you ass, not now!

Time, not thy ne'er so timely speech,
  Life, not thy views thereon,
Shall furnish or deny to each
  His consolation.

Or, if impelled to interfere,
  Exhort, uplift, advise,
Lend not a base, betraying ear
  To all the victim's cries.

Only the Lord can understand
  When those first pangs begin,
How much is reflex action and
  How much is really sin.

E'en from good words thyself refrain,
  And tremblingly admit
There is no anodyne for pain
  Except the shock of it.

So, when thine own dark hour shall fall,
  Unchallenged canst thou say:
'I never worried *you* at all,
  For God's sake go away!'

THE VILLAGE THAT VOTED THE EARTH WAS FLAT

(1913)

OUR drive till then had been quite a success. The other men in the car were my friend Woodhouse, young Ollyett, a distant connection of his, and Pallant, the M.P. Woodhouse's business was the treatment and cure of sick journals. He knew by instinct the precise moment in a newspaper's life when the impetus of past good management is exhausted and it fetches up on the dead-centre between slow and expensive collapse and the new start which can be given by gold injections—and genius. He was wisely ignorant of journalism; but when he stooped on a carcase there was sure to be meat. He had that week added a half-dead, halfpenny evening paper to his collection, which consisted of a prosperous London daily, one provincial ditto, and a limp-bodied weekly of commercial leanings. He had also, that very hour, planted me with a large block of the evening paper's common shares, and was explaining the whole art of editorship to Ollyett, a young man three years from Oxford, with coir-matting-coloured hair and a face harshly modelled by harsh experiences, who, I understood, was assisting in the new venture. Pallant, the long, wrinkled M.P., whose voice is more like a crane's than a peacock's, took no shares, but gave us all advice.

'You'll find it rather a knacker's yard,' Woodhouse was saying. 'Yes, I know they call me The Knacker; but it will pay inside a year. All my papers do. I've only one motto: Back your luck and back your staff. It'll come out all right.'

Then the car stopped, and a policeman asked our names and addresses for exceeding the speed-limit. We pointed out that the road ran absolutely straight for half a mile ahead without even a side-lane. 'That's just what we depend on,' said the policeman unpleasantly.

'The usual swindle,' said Woodhouse under his breath. 'What's the name of this place?'

'Huckley,' said the policeman. 'H-u-c-k-l-e-y,' and wrote something in his note-book at which young Ollyett protested. A large red man on a grey horse who had been watching us from the other side of the hedge shouted an order we could not catch. The policeman laid his hand on the rim of the right driving-door (Woodhouse carries his spare tyres aft), and it closed on the button of the electric horn. The grey horse at once bolted, and we could hear the rider swearing all across the landscape.

'Damn it, man, you've got your silly fist on it! Take it off!' Woodhouse shouted.

'Ho!' said the constable, looking carefully at his fingers as though we had trapped them. 'That won't do you any good either,' and he wrote once more in his note-book before he allowed us to go.

This was Woodhouse's first brush with motor law, and since I expected no ill consequences to myself, I pointed out that it was very serious. I took the same view myself when in due time I found that I, too, was

summonsed on charges ranging from the use of obscene language to endangering traffic.

Judgment was done in a little pale-yellow market-town with a small, Jubilee clock-tower and a large corn-exchange. Woodhouse drove us there in his car. Pallant, who had not been included in the summons, came with us as moral support. While we waited outside, the fat man on the grey horse rode up and entered into loud talk with his brother magistrates. He said to one of them—for I took the trouble to note it down—'It falls away from my lodge-gates, dead straight, three-quarters of a mile. I'd defy any one to resist it. We rooked seventy pounds out of 'em last month. No car can resist the temptation. You ought to have one your side the county, Mike. They simply can't resist it.'

'Whew!' said Woodhouse. 'We're in for trouble. Don't you say a word—or Ollyett either! I'll pay the fines and we'll get it over as soon as possible. Where's Pallant?'

'At the back of the court somewhere,' said Ollyett. 'I saw him slip in just now.'

The fat man then took his seat on the Bench, of which he was chairman, and I gathered from a bystander that his name was Sir Thomas Ingell, Bart., M.P., of Ingell Park, Huckley. He began with an allocution pitched in a tone that would have justified revolt throughout empires. Evidence, when the crowded little court did not drown it with applause, was given in the pauses of the address. They were all very proud of their Sir Thomas, and looked from him to us, wondering why we did not applaud too.

Taking its time from the chairman, the Bench rollicked with us for seventeen minutes. Sir Thomas ex-

plained that he was sick and tired of processions of cads of our type, who would be better employed breaking stones on the road than in frightening horses worth more than themselves or their ancestors. This was after it had been proved that Woodhouse's man had turned on the horn purposely to annoy Sir Thomas, who 'happened to be riding by'! There were other remarks too—primitive enough,—but it was the unspeakable brutality of the tone, even more than the quality of the justice, or the laughter of the audience that stung our souls out of all reason. When we were dismissed—to the tune of twenty-three pounds, twelve shillings and sixpence—we waited for Pallant to join us, while we listened to the next case—one of driving without a licence. Ollyett with an eye to his evening paper, had already taken very full notes of our own, but we did not wish to seem prejudiced.

'It's all right,' said the reporter of the local paper soothingly. 'We never report Sir Thomas *in extenso*. Only the fines and charges.'

'Oh, thank you,' Ollyett replied, and I heard him ask who every one in court might be. The local reporter was very communicative.

The new victim, a large, flaxen-haired man in somewhat striking clothes, to which Sir Thomas, now thoroughly warmed, drew public attention, said that he had left his licence at home. Sir Thomas asked him if he expected the police to go to his home address at Jerusalem to find it for him; and the court roared. Nor did Sir Thomas approve of the man's name, but insisted on calling him 'Mr. Masquerader,' and every time he did so, all his people shouted. Evidently this was their established *auto-da-fé*.

'He didn't summons me—because I'm in the House, I suppose. I think I shall have to ask a Question,' said Pallant, reappearing at the close of the case.

'I think *I* shall have to give it a little publicity too,' said Woodhouse. 'We can't have this kind of thing going on, you know.' His face was set and quite white. Pallant's, on the other hand, was black, and I know that my very stomach had turned with rage. Ollyett was dumb.

'Well, let's have lunch,' Woodhouse said at last. 'Then we can get away before the show breaks up.'

We drew Ollyett from the arms of the local reporter, crossed the Market Square to the Red Lion and found Sir Thomas's 'Mr. Masquerader' just sitting down to beer, beef and pickles.

'Ah!' said he, in a large voice. 'Companions in misfortune. Won't you gentlemen join me?'

'Delighted,' said Woodhouse. 'What did you get?'

'I haven't decided. It might make a good turn, but —the public aren't educated up to it yet. It's beyond 'em. If it wasn't, that red dub on the Bench would be worth fifty a week.'

'Where?' said Woodhouse. The man looked at him with unaffected surprise.

'At any one of My places,' he replied. 'But perhaps you live here?'

'Good heavens!' cried young Ollyett suddenly. 'You *are* Masquerier, then? I thought you were!'

'Bat Masquerier.' He let the words fall with the weight of an international ultimatum. 'Yes, that's all I am. But you have the advantage of me, gentlemen.'

For the moment, while we were introducing ourselves, I was puzzled. Then I recalled prismatic music-hall

posters—of enormous acreage—that had been the unnoticed background of my visits to London for years past. Posters of men and women, singers, jongleurs, impersonators and audacities of every draped and undraped brand, all moved on and off in London and the Provinces by Bat Masquerier—with the long wedge-tailed flourish following the final 'r.'

'*I* knew you at once,' said Pallant, the trained M.P., and I promptly backed the lie. Woodhouse mumbled excuses. Bat Masquerier was not moved for or against us any more than the frontage of one of his own palaces.

'I always tell My people there's a limit to the size of the lettering,' he said. 'Overdo that and the ret'na doesn't take it in. Advertisin' is the most delicate of all the sciences.'

'There's one man in the world who is going to get a little of it if I live for the next twenty-four hours,' said Woodhouse, and explained how this would come about.

Masquerier stared at him lengthily with gun-metal-blue eyes.

'You mean it?' he drawled; the voice was as magnetic as the look.

'*I* do,' said Ollyett. 'That business of the horn alone ought to have him off the Bench in three months.' Masquerier looked at him even longer than he had looked at Woodhouse.

'He told *me*,' he said suddenly, 'that my home-address was Jerusalem. You heard that?'

'But it was the tone—the tone,' Ollyett cried.

'You noticed that, too, did you?' said Masquerier. 'That's the artistic temperament. You can do a lot with it. And I'm Bat Masquerier,' he went on. He dropped his chin in his fists and scowled straight in front

of him. . . . 'I made the Silhouettes—I made the Trefoil and the Jocunda. I made 'Dal Benzaguen.' Here Ollyett sat straight up, for in common with the youth of that year he worshipped Miss Vidal Benzaguen of the Trefoil immensely and unreservedly. '"*Is* that a dressing-gown or an ulster you're supposed to be wearing?" You heard *that?* . . . "And I suppose you hadn't time to brush your hair either?" You heard *that?* . . . Now, you hear *me!*' His voice filled the coffee-room, then dropped to a whisper as dreadful as a surgeon's before an operation. He spoke for several minutes. Pallant muttered 'Hear! hear!' I saw Ollyett's eye flash—it was to Ollyett that Masquerier addressed himself chiefly,—and Woodhouse leaned forward with joined hands.

'Are you *with* me?' he went on, gathering us all up in one sweep of the arm. 'When I begin a thing I see it through, gentlemen. What Bat can't break, breaks him! But I haven't struck that thing yet. This is no one-turn turn-it-down show. This is business to the dead finish. Are you with me, gentlemen? Good! Now, we'll pool our assets. One London morning, and one provincial daily, didn't you say? One weekly commercial ditto and one M.P.'

'Not much use, I'm afraid,' Pallant smirked.

'But privileged. *But* privileged,' he returned. 'And we have also my little team—London, Blackburn, Liverpool, Leeds—I'll tell you about Manchester later—and Me! Bat Masquerier.' He breathed the name reverently into his tankard. 'Gentlemen, when our combination has finished with Sir Thomas Ingell, Bart., M.P., and everything else that is his, Sodom and Gomorrah will be a winsome bit of Merrie England beside

'em. I must go back to town now, but I trust you gentlemen will give me the pleasure of your company at dinner to-night at the Chop Suey—the Red Amber Room—and we'll block out the scenario.' He laid his hand on young Ollyett's shoulder and added: 'It's your brains I want.' Then he left, in a good deal of astrachan collar and nickel-plated limousine, and the place felt less crowded.

We ordered our car a few minutes later. As Woodhouse, Ollyett and I were getting in, Sir Thomas Ingell, Bart., M.P., came out of the Hall of Justice across the square and mounted his horse. I have sometimes thought that if he had gone in silence he might even then have been saved, but as he settled himself in the saddle he caught sight of us and must needs shout: 'Not off yet? You'd better get away and you'd better be careful.' At that moment Pallant, who had been buying picture-postcards, came out of the inn, took Sir Thomas's eye and very leisurely entered the car. It seemed to me that for one instant there was a shade of uneasiness on the baronet's grey-whiskered face.

'I hope,' said Woodhouse after several miles, 'I hope he's a widower.'

'Yes,' said Pallant. 'For his poor, dear wife's sake I hope that, very much indeed. I suppose he didn't see me in Court. Oh, here's the parish history of Huckley written by the Rector and here's your share of the picture-postcards. Are we all dining with this Mr. Masquerier to-night?'

'Yes!' said we all.

. . . . . .

If Woodhouse knew nothing of journalism, young Ollyett, who had graduated in a hard school, knew a

good deal. Our halfpenny evening paper, which we will call *The Bun* to distinguish her from her prosperous morning sister, *The Cake*, was not only diseased but corrupt. We found this out when a man brought us the prospectus of a new oil-field and demanded sub-leaders on its prosperity. Ollyett talked pure Brasenose to him for three minutes. Otherwise he spoke and wrote trade-English—a toothsome amalgam of Americanisms and epigrams. But though the slang changes the game never alters, and Ollyett and I and, in the end, some others enjoyed it immensely. It was weeks ere we could see the wood for the trees, but so soon as the staff realised that they had proprietors who backed them right or wrong, and specially when they were wrong (which is the sole secret of journalism), and that their fate did not hang on any passing owner's passing mood, they did miracles.

But we did not neglect Huckley. As Ollyett said our first care was to create an 'arresting atmosphere' round it. He used to visit the village of week-ends, on a motor-bicycle with a side-car; for which reason I left the actual place alone and dealt with it in the abstract. Yet it was I who drew first blood. Two inhabitants of Huckley wrote to contradict a small, quite solid paragraph in *The Bun* that a hoopoe had been seen at Huckley and had, 'of course, been shot by the local sportsmen.' There was some heat in their letters, both of which we published. Our version of how the hoopoe got his crest from King Solomon was, I grieve to say, so inaccurate that the Rector himself—no sportsman as he pointed out, but a lover of accuracy—wrote to us to correct it. We gave his letter good space and thanked him.

'This priest is going to be useful,' said Ollyett. 'He has the impartial mind. I shall vitalise him.'

Forthwith he created M. L. Sigden, a recluse of refined tastes who in *The Bun* demanded to know whether this Huckley-of-the-Hoopoe was the Hugly of his boyhood and whether, by any chance, the fell change of name had been wrought by collusion between a local magnate and the railway, in the mistaken interests of spurious refinement. 'For I knew it and loved it with the maidens of my day—*eheu ab angulo !*—as Hugly,' wrote M. L. Sigden from Oxford.

Though other papers scoffed, *The Bun* was gravely sympathetic. Several people wrote to deny that Huckley had been changed at birth. Only the Rector—no philosopher as he pointed out, but a lover of accuracy—had his doubts, which he laid publicly before Mr. M. L. Sigden, who suggested, through *The Bun*, that the little place might have begun life in Anglo-Saxon days as 'Hogslea' or among the Normans as 'Argilé,' on account of its much clay. The Rector had his own ideas too (he said it was mostly gravel), and M. L. Sigden had a fund of reminiscences. Oddly enough—which is seldom the case with free reading-matter—our subscribers rather relished the correspondence, and contemporaries quoted freely.

'The secret of power,' said Ollyett, 'is not the big stick. It's the liftable stick.' (This means the 'arresting' quotation of six or seven lines.) 'Did you see the *Spec.* had a middle on "Rural Tenacities" last week. That was all Huckley. I'm doing a "Mobiquity" on Huckley next week.'

Our 'Mobiquities' were Friday evening accounts of easy motor-bike-*cum*-side-car trips round London, illus-

trated (we could never get that machine to work properly) by smudgy maps. Ollyett wrote the stuff with a fervour and a delicacy which I always ascribed to the side-car. His account of Epping Forest, for instance, was simply young love with its soul at its lips. But his Huckley 'Mobiquity' would have sickened a soap-boiler. It chemically combined loathsome familiarity, leering suggestion, slimy piety and rancid 'social service' in one fuming compost that fairly lifted me off my feet.

'Yes,' said he, after compliments. 'It's the most vital, arresting and dynamic bit of tump I've done up to date. *Non nobis gloria!* I met Sir Thomas Ingell in his own park. He talked to me again. He inspired most of it.'

'Which? The "glutinous native drawl," or "the neglected adenoids of the village children"?' I demanded.

'Oh, no! That's only to bring in the panel doctor. It's the last flight we—I'm proudest of.'

This dealt with 'the crepuscular penumbra spreading her dim limbs over the boskage'; with 'jolly rabbits'; with a herd of 'gravid polled Angus'; and with the 'arresting, gipsy-like face of their swart, scholarly owner —as well known at the Royal Agricultural Shows as that of our late King-Emperor.'

'"Swart" is good and so's "gravid,"' said I, 'but the panel doctor will be annoyed about the adenoids.'

'Not half as much as Sir Thomas will about his face,' said Ollyett. 'And if you only knew what I've left out!'

He was right. The panel doctor spent his week-end (this is the advantage of Friday articles) in overwhelming us with a professional counterblast of no interest

whatever to our subscribers. We told him so, and he, then and there, battered his way with it into the *Lancet* where they are keen on glands, and forgot us altogether. But Sir Thomas Ingell was of sterner stuff. He must have spent a happy week-end too. The letter which we received from him on Monday proved him to be a kinless loon of upright life, for no woman, however remotely interested in a man would have let it pass the home wastepaper-basket. He objected to our references to his own herd, to his own labours in his own village, which he said was a Model Village, and to our infernal insolence; but he objected most to our invoice of his features. We wrote him courteously to ask whether the letter was meant for publication. He, remembering, I presume, the Duke of Wellington, wrote back, 'publish and be damned.'

'Oh! This is too easy,' Ollyett said as he began heading the letter.

'Stop a minute,' I said. 'The game is getting a little beyond us. To-night's the Bat dinner.' (I may have forgotten to tell you that our dinner with Bat Masquerier in the Red Amber Room of the Chop Suey had come to be a weekly affair.) 'Hold it over till they've all seen it.'

'Perhaps you're right,' he said. 'You might waste it.'

At dinner, then, Sir Thomas's letter was handed round. Bat seemed to be thinking of other matters, but Pallant was very interested.

'I've got an idea,' he said presently. 'Could you put something into *The Bun* to-morrow about foot-and-mouth disease in that fellow's herd?'

'Oh, plague if you like,' Ollyett replied. 'They're

only five measly Shorthorns. I saw one lying down in the park. She'll serve as a sub-stratum of fact.'

'Then, do that; and hold the letter over meanwhile. I think *I* come in here,' said Pallant.

'Why?' said I.

'Because there's something coming up in the House about foot-and-mouth, and because he wrote me a letter after that little affair when he fined you. 'Took ten days to think it over. Here you are,' said Pallant. 'House of Commons paper, you see.'

We read:

DEAR PALLANT—Although in the past our paths have not lain much together, I am sure you will agree with me that on the floor of the House all members are on a footing of equality. I make bold, therefore, to approach you in a matter which I think capable of a very different interpretation from that which perhaps was put upon it by your friends. Will you let them know that that was the case and that I was in no way swayed by animus in the exercise of my magisterial duties, which as you, as a brother magistrate, can imagine are frequently very distasteful to—Yours very sincerely,

T. INGELL.

P.S.—I have seen to it that the motor vigilance to which your friends took exception has been considerably relaxed in my district.

'What did you answer?' said Ollyett, when all our opinions had been expressed.

'I told him I couldn't do anything in the matter.

And I couldn't—then. But you'll remember to put in that foot-and-mouth paragraph. I want something to work upon.'

'It seems to me *The Bun* has done all the work up to date,' I suggested. 'When does *The Cake* come in?'

'*The Cake*,' said Woodhouse, and I remembered afterwards that he spoke like a Cabinet Minister on the eve of a Budget, 'reserves to itself the fullest right to deal with situations as they arise.'

'Ye-eh!' Bat Masquerier shook himself out of his thoughts. '"Situations as they arise." I ain't idle either. But there's no use fishing till the swim's baited. You'—he turned to Ollyett—'manufacture very good ground-bait. . . . I always tell My people—— What the deuce is that?'

There was a burst of song from another private dining-room across the landing. 'It ees some ladies from the Trefoil,' the waiter began.

'Oh, I know that. What are they singing, though?'

He rose and went out, to be greeted by shouts of applause from that merry company. Then there was silence, such as one hears in the form-room after a master's entry. Then a voice that we loved began again: 'Here we go gathering nuts in May—nuts in May—nuts in May!'

'It's only 'Dal—and some nuts,' he explained when he returned. 'She says she's coming in to dessert.' He sat down, humming the old tune to himself, and till Miss Vidal Benzaguen entered, he held us speechless with tales of the artistic temperament.

We obeyed Pallant to the extent of slipping into *The Bun* a wary paragraph about cows lying down and dripping at the mouth, which might be read either as

an unkind libel or, in the hands of a capable lawyer, as a piece of faithful nature-study.

'And besides,' said Ollyett, 'we allude to "gravid polled Angus." I am advised that no action can lie in respect of virgin Shorthorns. Pallant wants us to come to the House to-night. He's got us places for the Strangers' Gallery. I'm beginning to like Pallant.'

'Masquerier seems to like you,' I said.

'Yes, but I'm afraid of him,' Ollyett answered with perfect sincerity. 'I am. He's the Absolutely Amoral Soul. I've never met one yet.'

We went to the House together. It happened to be an Irish afternoon, and as soon as I had got the cries and the faces a little sorted out, I gathered there were grievances in the air, but how many of them was beyond me.

'It's all right,' said Ollyett of the trained ear. 'They've shut their ports against—oh yes—export of Irish cattle! Foot-and-mouth disease at Ballyhellion. *I* see Pallant's idea!'

The House was certainly all mouth for the moment, but, as I could feel, quite in earnest. A Minister with a piece of typewritten paper seemed to be fending off volleys of insults. He reminded me somehow of a nervous huntsman breaking up a fox in the face of rabid hounds.

'It's question-time. They're asking questions,' said Ollyett. 'Look! Pallant's up.'

There was no mistaking it. His voice, which his enemies said was his one parliamentary asset, silenced the hubbub as toothache silences mere singing in the ears. He said:

'Arising out of that, may I ask if any special consideration has recently been shown in regard to any sus-

pected outbreak of this disease on *this* side of the Channel?'

He raised his hand; it held a noon edition of *The Bun*. We had thought it best to drop the paragraph out of the later ones. He would have continued, but something in a grey frock-coat roared and bounded on a bench opposite, and waved another *Bun*. It was Sir Thomas Ingell.

'As the owner of the herd so dastardly implicated——' His voice was drowned in shouts of 'Order!'—the Irish leading.

'What's wrong?' I asked Ollyett. 'He's got his hat on his head, hasn't he?'

'Yes, but his wrath should have been put as a question.'

'Arising out of that, Mr. Speaker, Sirrr!' Sir Thomas bellowed through a lull, 'are you aware that—that all this is a conspiracy—part of a dastardly conspiracy to make Huckley ridiculous—to make *us* ridiculous? Part of a deep-laid plot to make *me* ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, Sir!'

The man's face showed almost black against his white whiskers, and he struck out swimmingly with his arms. His vehemence puzzled and held the House for an instant, and the Speaker took advantage of it to lift his pack from Ireland to a new scent. He addressed Sir Thomas Ingell in tones of measured rebuke, meant also, I imagine, for the whole House, which lowered its hackles at the word. Then Pallant, shocked and pained: 'I can only express my profound surprise that in response to my simple question the honourable member should have thought fit to indulge in a personal attack. If I have in any way offended——'

Again the Speaker intervened, for it appeared that he regulated these matters.

He, too, expressed surprise, and Sir Thomas sat back in a hush of reprobation that seemed to have the chill of the centuries behind it. The Empire's work was resumed.

'Beautiful!' said I, and I felt hot and cold up my back.

'And now we'll publish his letter,' said Ollyett.

We did—on the heels of his carefully reported outburst. We made no comment. With that rare instinct for grasping the heart of a situation which is the mark of the Anglo-Saxon, all our contemporaries and, I should say, two-thirds of our correspondents demanded how such a person could be made more ridiculous than he had already proved himself to be. But beyond spelling his name 'Injle,' we alone refused to hit a man when he was down.

'There's no need,' said Ollyett. 'The whole press is on the huckle from end to end.'

Even Woodhouse was a little astonished at the ease with which it had come about, and said as much.

'Rot!' said Ollyett. 'We haven't really begun. Huckley isn't news yet.'

'What do you mean?' said Woodhouse, who had grown to have great respect for his young but by no means distant connection.

'Mean? By the grace of God, Master Ridley, I mean to have it so that when Huckley turns over in its sleep, Reuters and the Press Association jump out of bed to cable.' Then he went off at score about certain restorations in Huckley Church which, he said—and he seemed to spend his every week-end there—had been perpetrated by the Rector's predecessor, who had

abolished a 'leper-window' or a 'squinch-hole' (whatever these may be) to institute a lavatory in the vestry. It did not strike me as stuff for which Reuters or the Press Association would lose much sleep, and I left him declaiming to Woodhouse about a fourteenth-century font which, he said, he had unearthed in the sexton's tool-shed.

My methods were more on the lines of peaceful penetration. An odd copy, in *The Bun's* rag-and-bone library, of Hone's *Every-Day Book* had revealed to me the existence of a village dance founded, like all village dances, on Druidical mysteries connected with the Solar Solstice (which is always unchallengeable) and Midsummer Morning, which is dewy and refreshing to the London eye. For this I take no credit—Hone being a mine any one can work—but that I rechristened that dance, after I had revised it, 'The Gubby' is my title to immortal fame. It was still to be witnessed, I wrote, 'in all its poignant purity at Huckley, that last home of significant mediæval survivals'; and I fell so in love with my creation that I kept it back for days, enamelling and burnishing.

'You's better put it in,' said Ollyett at last. 'It's time we asserted ourselves again. The other fellows are beginning to poach. You saw that thing in the *Pinnacle* about Sir Thomas's Model Village? He must have got one of their chaps down to do it.'

''Nothing like the wounds of a friend,' I said. 'That account of the non-alcoholic pub alone was——'

'I liked the bit best about the white-tiled laundry and the Fallen Virgins who wash Sir Thomas's dress shirts. Our side couldn't come within a mile of that, you know. We haven't the proper flair for sexual slobber.'

'That's what I'm always saying,' I retorted. 'Leave 'em alone. The other fellows are doing our work for us now. Besides I want to touch up my "Gubby Dance" a little more.'

'No. You'll spoil it. Let's shove it in to-day. For one thing it's Literature. I don't go in for compliments as you know, but, etc., etc.'

I had a healthy suspicion of young Ollyett in every aspect, but though I knew that I should have to pay for it, I fell to his flattery, and my priceless article on the 'Gubby Dance' appeared. Next Saturday he asked me to bring out *The Bun* in his absence, which I naturally assumed would be connected with the little maroon side-car. I was wrong.

On the following Monday I glanced at *The Cake* at breakfast-time to make sure, as usual, of her inferiority to my beloved but unremunerative *Bun*. I opened on a heading: 'The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat.' I read . . . I read that the Geoplanarian Society—a society devoted to the proposition that the earth is flat—had held its Annual Banquet and Exercises at Huckley on Saturday, when after convincing addresses, amid scenes of the greatest enthusiasm, Huckley village had decided by an unanimous vote of 438 that the earth was flat. I do not remember that I breathed again till I had finished the two columns of description that followed. Only one man could have written them. They were flawless—crisp, nervous, austere yet human, poignant, vital, arresting—most distinctly arresting—dynamic enough to shift a city—and quotable by whole sticks at a time. And there was a leader, a grave and poised leader, which tore me in two with mirth, until I remembered that I had been left out—infamously and

unjustifiably dropped. I went to Ollyett's rooms. He was breakfasting, and, to do him justice, looked conscience-stricken.

'It wasn't my fault,' he began. 'It was Bat Masquerier. I swear *I* would have asked you to come if——'

'Never mind that,' I said. 'It's the best bit of work you've ever done or will do. Did any of it happen?'

'Happen? Heavens! D'you think even *I* could have invented it?'

'Is it exclusive to *The Cake?*' I cried.

'It cost Bat Masquerier two thousand,' Ollyett replied. 'D'you think he'd let any one else in on that? But I give you my sacred word I knew nothing about it till he asked me to come down and cover it. He had Huckley posted in three colours, "The Geoplanarians' Annual Banquet and Exercises." Yes, he invented "Geoplanarians." He wanted Huckley to think it meant aeroplanes. Yes, I know that there is a real Society that thinks the world's flat—they ought to be grateful for the lift—but Bat made his own. He did! He created the whole show, I tell you. He swept out half his Halls for the job. Think of that—on a Saturday! They—we went down in motor char-à-bancs—three of 'em—one pink, one primrose, and one forget-me-not blue—twenty people in each one and "The Earth *is* Flat" on each side and across the back. I went with Teddy Rickets and Lafone from the Trefoil, and both the Silhouette Sisters, and—wait a minute!—the Crossleigh Trio. You know the Every-Day Dramas Trio at the Jocunda—Ada Crossleigh, "Bunt" Crossleigh, and little Victorine? Them. And there was Hoke Ramsden, the lightning-change chap in *Morgiana*

and Drexel—and there was Billy Turpeen. Yes, you know him! The North London Star. "I'm the Referee that got himself disliked at Blackheath." *That* chap! And there was Mackaye—that one-eyed Scotch fellow that all Glasgow is crazy about. Talk of subordinating yourself for Art's sake! Mackaye was the earnest inquirer who got converted at the end of the meeting. And there was quite a lot of girls I didn't know, and—oh, yes—there was 'Dal! 'Dal Benzaguen herself! We sat together, going and coming. She's all the darling there ever was. She sent you her love, and she told me to tell you that she won't forget about Nellie Farren. She says you've given her an ideal to work for. She? Oh, she was the Lady Secretary to the Geoplanarians, of course. I forget who were in the other brakes—provincial stars mostly—but they played up gorgeously. The art of the music-hall's changed since your day. They didn't overdo it a bit. You see, people who believe the earth is flat don't dress quite like other people. You may have noticed that I hinted at that in my account. It's a rather flat-fronted Ionic style—neo-Victorian, except for the bustles, 'Dal told me,—but 'Dal looked heavenly in it! So did little Victorine. And there was a girl in the blue brake—she's a provincial—but she's coming to town this winter and she'll knock 'em—Winnie Deans. Remember that! She told Huckley how she had suffered for the Cause as a governess in a rich family where they believed that the world is round, and how she threw up her job sooner than teach immoral geography. That was at the overflow meeting outside the Baptist chapel. She knocked 'em to sawdust! We must look out for Winnie. . . . But Lafone! Lafone was beyond everything. Impact,

personality—conviction—the whole bag o' tricks! He sweated conviction. Gad, he convinced *me* while he was speaking! (Him? He was President of the Geoplanarians, of course. Haven't you read my account?) It *is* an infernally plausible theory. After all, no one has actually proved the earth is round, have they?'

'Never mind the earth. What about Huckley?'

'Oh, Huckley got tight. That's the worst of these model villages if you let 'em smell fire-water. There's one alcoholic pub in the place that Sir Thomas can't get rid of. Bat made it his base. He sent down the banquet in two motor lorries—dinner for five hundred and drinks for ten thousand. Huckley voted all right. Don't you make any mistake about that. No vote, no dinner. A unanimous vote—exactly as I've said. At least, the Rector and the Doctor were the only dissentients. We didn't count them. Oh yes, Sir Thomas was there. He came and grinned at us through his park gates. He'll grin worse to-day. There's an aniline dye that you rub through a stencil-plate that eats about a foot into any stone and wears good to the last. Bat had both the lodge-gates stencilled "The Earth *is* flat!" and all the barns and walls they could get at. . . . Oh Lord, but Huckley was drunk! We had to fill 'em up to make 'em forgive us for not being aeroplanes. Unthankful yokels! D'you realise that Emperors couldn't have commanded the talent Bat decanted on 'em? Why, 'Dal alone was. . . . And by eight o'clock not even a bit of paper left! The whole show packed up and gone, and Huckley hoo-raying for the earth being flat.'

'Very good,' I began. 'I am, as you know, a one-third proprietor of *The Bun*.'

'I didn't forget that,' Ollyett interrupted. 'That was uppermost in my mind all the time. I've got a special account for *The Bun* to-day—it's an idyll—and just to show how I thought of you, I told 'Dal, coming home, about your Gubby Dance, and she told Winnie. Winnie came back in our char-à-banc. After a bit we had to get out and dance it in a field. It's quite a dance the way we did it—and Lafone invented a sort of gorilla lockstep procession at the end. Bat had sent down a film-chap on the chance of getting something. He was the son of a clergyman—a most dynamic personality. He said there isn't anything for the cinema in meetings *qua* meetings—they lack action. Films are a branch of art by themselves. But he went wild over the Gubby. He said it was like Peter's vision at Joppa. He took about a million feet of it. Then I photoed it exclusive for *The Bun*. I've sent 'em in already, only remember we must eliminate Winnie's left leg in the first figure. It's too arresting. . . . And there you are! But I tell you I'm afraid of Bat. That man's the Personal Devil. He did it all. He didn't even come down himself. He said he'd distract his people.'

'Why didn't he ask me to come?' I persisted.

'Because he said you'd distract me. He said he wanted my brains on ice. He got 'em. I believe it's the best thing I've ever done.' He reached for *The Cake* and re-read it luxuriously. 'Yes, out and away the best—supremely quotable,' he concluded, and—after another survey—'By God, what a genius I was yesterday!'

I would have been angry, but I had not the time. That morning, Press agencies grovelled to me in *The Bun* office for leave to use certain photos, which, they

understood, I controlled, of a certain village dance. When I had sent the fifth man away on the edge of tears, my self-respect came back a little. Then there was *The Bun's* poster to get out. Art being elimination, I fined it down to two words (one too many, as it proved)—'The Gubby!' in red, at which our manager protested; but by five o'clock he told me that I was *the* Napoleon of Fleet Street. Ollyett's account in *The Bun* of the Geoplanarians' Exercises and Love Feast lacked the supreme shock of his version in *The Cake*, but it bruised more; while the photos of 'The Gubby' (which, with Winnie's left leg, was why I had set the doubtful press to work so early) were beyond praise and, next day, beyond price. But even then I did not understand.

A week later, I think it was, Bat Masquerier telephoned to me to come to the Trefoil.

'It's your turn now,' he said. 'I'm not asking Ollyett. Come to the stage-box.'

I went, and, as Bat's guest, was received as Royalty is not. We sat well back and looked out on the packed thousands. It was *Morgiana and Drexel*, that fluid and electric review which Bat—though he gave Lafone the credit—really created.

'Ye-es,' said Bat dreamily, after Morgiana had given 'the nasty jar' to the Forty Thieves in their forty oil 'combinations.' 'As you say, I've got 'em and I can hold 'em. What a man does doesn't matter much; and how he does it don't matter either. It's the *when*—the psychological moment. 'Press can't make up for it; money can't; brains can't. A lot's luck, but all the rest is genius. I'm not speaking about My people now. I'm talking of Myself.'

Then 'Dal—she was the only one who dared—

knocked at the door and stood behind us all alive and panting as Morgiana. Lafone was carrying the police-court scene, and the house was ripped up crossways with laughter.

'Ah! Tell a fellow now,' she asked me for the twentieth time, 'did you love Nellie Farren when you were young?'

'Did we love her?' I answered. '"If the earth and the sky and the sea"—There were three million of us, 'Dal, and we worshipped her.'

'How did she get it across?' 'Dal went on.

'She was Nellie. The houses used to coo over her when she came on.'

'I've had a good deal, but I've never been cooed over yet,' said 'Dal wistfully.

'It isn't the how, it's the when,' Bat repeated. 'Ah!'

He leaned forward as the house began to rock and peal full-throatedly. 'Dal fled. A sinuous and silent procession was filing into the police-court to a scarcely audible accompaniment. It was dressed—but the world and all its picture-palaces know how it was dressed. It danced and it danced, and it danced the dance which bit all humanity in the leg for half a year, and it wound up with the lockstep finale that mowed the house down in swathes, sobbing and aching. Somebody in the gallery moaned, 'Oh Gord, the Gubby!' and we heard the word run like a shudder, for they had not a full breath left among them. Then 'Dal came on, an electric star in her dark hair, the diamonds flashing in her three-inch heels—a vision that made no sign for thirty counted seconds while the police-court scene dissolved behind her into Morgiana's Manicure Palace, and they recovered themselves. The star on her fore-

head went out, and a soft light bathed her as she took —slowly, slowly to the croon of adoring strings—the eighteen paces forward. We saw her first as a queen alone; next as a queen for the first time conscious of her subjects, and at the end, when her hands fluttered, as a woman delighted, awed not a little, but transfigured and illuminated with sheer, compelling affection and goodwill. I caught the broken mutter of welcome—the coo which is more than tornadoes of applause. It died and rose and died again lovingly.

'She's got it across,' Bat whispered. 'I've never seen her like this. I told her to light up the star, but I was wrong, and she knew it. She's an artist.'

''Dal, you darling!' some one spoke, not loudly but it carried through the house.

'Thank *you!*' 'Dal answered, and in that broken tone one heard the last fetter riveted. 'Good evening, boys! I've just come from—now—where the dooce was it I have come from?' She turned to the impassive files of the Gubby dancers, and went on: 'Ah, so good of you to remind me, you dear, bun-faced things. I've just come from the village—The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat.'

She swept into that song with the full orchestra. It devastated the habitable earth for the next six months. Imagine, then, what its rage and pulse must have been at the incandescent hour of its birth! She only gave the chorus once. At the end of the second verse, 'Are you *with* me, boys?' she cried, and the house tore it clean away from her—'*Earth* was flat—*Earth* was flat. Flat as my hat—Flatter than that'—drowning all but the bassoons and double-basses that marked the word.

'Wonderful,' I said to Bat. 'And it's only "Nuts in May" with variations.'

'Yes—but *I* did the variations,' he replied.

At the last verse she gestured to Carlini the conductor, who threw her up his baton. She caught it with a boy's ease. 'Are you *with* me?' she cried once more, and—the maddened house behind her—abolished all the instruments except the guttural belch of the double-basses on '*Earth*'—'The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat—*Earth* was flat!' It was delirium. Then she picked up the Gubby dancers and led them in a clattering improvised lockstep thrice round the stage till her last kick sent her diamond-hilted shoe catherine-wheeling to the electrolier.

I saw the forest of hands raised to catch it, heard the roaring and stamping pass through hurricanes to full typhoon; heard the song, pinned down by the faithful double-basses as the bull-dog pins down the bellowing bull, overbear even those; till at last the curtain fell and Bat took me round to her dressing-room, where she lay spent after her seventh call. Still the song, through all those white-washed walls, shook the reinforced concrete of the Trefoil as steam pile-drivers shake the flanks of a dock.

'I'm all out—first time in my life. Ah! Tell a fellow now, did I get it across?' she whispered huskily.

'You know you did,' I replied as she dipped her nose in a beaker of barley-water. 'They cooed over you.'

Bat nodded. 'And poor Nellie's dead—in Africa, ain't it?'

'I hope I'll die before they stop cooing,' said 'Dal.

'"*Earth* was flat—*Earth* was flat!"' Now it was more like mine-pumps in flood.

'They'll have the house down if you don't take another,' some one called.

'Bless 'em!' said 'Dal, and went out for her eighth, when in the face of that cataract she said yawning, 'I don't know how *you* feel, children, but *I*'m dead. You be quiet.'

'Hold a minute,' said Bat to me. 'I've got to hear how it went in the provinces. Winnie Deans had it in Manchester, and Ramsden at Glasgow—and there are all the films too. I had rather a heavy week-end.'

The telephones presently reassured him.

'It'll do,' said he. 'And *he* said my home address was Jerusalem.' He left me humming the refrain of 'The Holy City.' Like Ollyett I found myself afraid of that man.

When I got out into the street and met the disgorging picture-palaces capering on the pavements and humming it (for he had put the gramophones on with the films), and when I saw far to the south the red electrics flash 'Gubby' across the Thames, I feared more than ever.

. . . . . .

A few days passed which were like nothing except, perhaps, a suspense of fever in which the sick man perceives the searchlights of the world's assembled navies in act to converge on one minute fragment of wreckage —one only in all the black and agony-strewn sea. Then those beams focussed themselves. Earth as we knew it—the full circuit of our orb—laid the weight of its impersonal and searing curiosity on this Huckley which had voted that it was flat. It asked for news about Huckley—where and what it might be, and how

it talked—it knew how it danced—and how it thought in its wonderful soul. And then, in all the zealous, merciless press, Huckley was laid out for it to look at, as a drop of pond water is exposed on the sheet of a magic-lantern show. But Huckley's sheet was only coterminous with the use of type among mankind. For the precise moment that was necessary, Fate ruled it that there should be nothing of first importance in the world's idle eye. One atrocious murder, a political crisis, an incautious or heady continental statesman, the mere catarrh of a king, would have wiped out the significance of our message, as a passing cloud annuls the urgent helio. But it was halcyon weather in every respect. Ollyett and I did not need to lift our little fingers any more than the Alpine climber whose last sentence has unkeyed the arch of the avalanche. The thing roared and pulverised and swept beyond eyesight all by itself—all by itself. And once well away, the fall of kingdoms could not have diverted it.

Ours is, after all, a kindly earth. While The Song ran and raped it with the cataleptic kick of 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay,' multiplied by the West African significance of 'Everybody's doing it,' plus twice the infernal elementality of a certain tune in *Dona et Gamma;* when for all practical purposes, literary, dramatic, artistic, social, municipal, political, commercial, and administrative, the Earth *was* flat, the Rector of Huckley wrote to us—again as a lover of accuracy—to point out that the Huckley vote on 'the alleged flatness of this scene of our labours here below' was *not* unanimous; he and the doctor having voted against it. And the great Baron Reuter himself (I am sure it could have been none other) flashed that letter in full to the front, back,

and both wings of this scene of our labours. For Huckley was News. *The Bun* also contributed a photograph which cost me some trouble to fake.

'We are a vital nation,' said Ollyett while we were discussing affairs at a Bat dinner. 'Only an Englishman could have written that letter at this present juncture.'

'It reminded me of a tourist in the Cave of the Winds under Niagara. Just one figure in a mackintosh. But perhaps you saw our photo?' I said proudly.

'Yes,' Bat replied. 'I've been to Niagara, too. And how's Huckley taking it?'

'They don't quite understand, of course,' said Ollyett. 'But it's bringing pots of money into the place. Ever since the motor-bus excursions were started——'

'I didn't know they had been,' said Pallant.

'Oh yes. Motor char-à-bancs—uniformed guides and key-bugles included. They're getting a bit fed up with the tune there nowadays,' Ollyett added.

'They play it under his windows, don't they?' Bat asked. 'He can't stop the right of way across his park.'

'He cannot,' Ollyett answered. 'By the way, Woodhouse, I've bought that font for you from the sexton. I paid fifteen pounds for it.'

'What am I supposed to do with it?' asked Woodhouse.

'You give it to the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is fourteenth-century work all right. You can trust me.'

'Is it worth it—now?' said Pallant. 'Not that I'm weakening, but merely as a matter of tactics?'

'But this is true,' said Ollyett. 'Besides, it is my hobby, I always wanted to be an architect. I'll attend

to it myself. It's too serious for *The Bun* and miles too good for *The Cake*.'

He broke ground in a ponderous architectural weekly, which had never heard of Huckley. There was no passion in his statement, but mere fact backed by a wide range of authorities. He established beyond doubt that the old font at Huckley had been thrown out, on Sir Thomas's instigation, twenty years ago, to make room for a new one of Bath stone adorned with Limoges enamels; and that it had lain ever since in a corner of the sexton's shed. He proved, with learned men to support him, that there was only one other font in all England to compare with it. So Woodhouse bought it and presented it to a grateful South Kensington which said it would see the earth still flatter before it returned the treasure to purblind Huckley. Bishops by the benchful and most of the Royal Academy, not to mention 'Margaritas ante Porcos,' wrote fervently to the papers. *Punch* based a political cartoon on it; the *Times* a third leader, 'The Lust of Newness'; and the *Spectator* a scholarly and delightful middle, 'Village Hausmania.' The vast amused outside world said in all its tongues and types: 'Of course! This is just what Huckley would do!' And neither Sir Thomas nor the Rector nor the sexton nor any one else wrote to deny it.

'You see,' said Ollyett, 'this is much more of a blow to Huckley than it looks—because every word of it's true. Your Gubby dance was inspiration, I admit, but it hadn't its roots in——'

'Two hemispheres and four continents so far,' I pointed out.

'Its roots in the hearts of Huckley was what I was going to say. Why don't you ever come down and look

at the place? You've never seen it since we were stopped there.'

'I've only my week-ends free,' I said, 'and you seem to spend yours there pretty regularly—with the side-car. I was afraid——'

'Oh, *that's* all right,' he said cheerily. 'We're quite an old engaged couple now. As a matter of fact, it happened after "the gravid polled Angus" business. Come along this Saturday. Woodhouse says he'll run us down after lunch. He wants to see Huckley too.'

Pallant could not accompany us, but Bat took his place.

'It's odd,' said Bat, 'that none of us except Ollyett has ever set eyes on Huckley since that time. That's what I always tell My people. Local colour is all right after you've got your idea. Before that, it's a mere nuisance.' He regaled us on the way down with panoramic views of the success—geographical and financial—of 'The Gubby' and The Song.

'By the way,' said he, 'I've assigned 'Dal all the gramophone rights of "The Earth." She's a born artist. 'Hadn't sense enough to hit me for triple-dubs the morning after. She'd have taken it out in coos.'

'Bless her! And what'll she make out of the gramophone rights?' I asked.

'Lord knows!' he replied. 'I've made fifty-four thousand my little end of the business, and it's only just beginning. Hear *that!*'

A shell-pink motor-brake roared up behind us to the music on a key-bugle of 'The Village that Voted the Earth was Flat.' In a few minutes we overtook another, in natural wood, whose occupants were singing it through their noses.

'I don't know that agency. It must be Cook's,' said Ollyett. 'They *do* suffer.' We were never out of earshot of the tune the rest of the way to Huckley.

Though I knew it would be so, I was disappointed with the actual aspect of the spot we had—it is not too much to say—created in the face of the nations. The alcoholic pub; the village green; the Baptist chapel; the church; the sexton's shed; the Rectory whence the so-wonderful letters had come; Sir Thomas's park gate-pillars still violently declaring 'The Earth *is* flat,' were as mean, as average, as ordinary as the photograph of a room where a murder has been committed. Ollyett, who, of course, knew the place specially well, made the most of it to us. Bat, who had employed it as a back-cloth to one of his own dramas, dismissed it as a thing used and emptied, but Woodhouse expressed my feelings when he said: 'Is that all—after all we've done?'

'*I* know,' said Ollyett soothingly. '"Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing: When Ilion like a mist rose into towers." I've felt the same sometimes, though it has been Paradise for me. But they *do* suffer.'

The fourth brake in thirty minutes had just turned into Sir Thomas's park to tell the Hall that 'The *Earth* was flat'; a knot of obviously American tourists were kodaking his lodge-gates; while the tea-shop opposite the lych-gate was full of people buying postcards of the old font as it had lain twenty years in the sexton's shed. We went to the alcoholic pub and congratulated the proprietor.

'It's bringin' money to the place,' said he. 'But in a sense you can buy money too dear. It isn't doin' us any good. People are laughin' at us. That's what

they're doin'. . . . Now, with regard to that Vote of ours you may have heard talk about. . . .'

'For Gorze sake, chuck that votin' business,' cried an elderly man at the door. 'Money-gettin' or no money-gettin', we're fed up with it.'

'Well, I do think,' said the publican, shifting his ground, 'I do think Sir Thomas might ha' managed better in some things.'

'He tole me,'—the elderly man shouldered his way to the bar—'he tole me twenty years ago to take an' lay that font in my tool-shed. He *tole* me so himself. An' now, after twenty years, me own wife makin' me out little better than the common 'angman!'

'That's the sexton,' the publican explained. 'His good lady sells the postcards—if you 'aven't got some. But we feel Sir Thomas might ha' done better.'

'What's he got to do with it?' said Woodhouse.

'There's nothin' we can trace 'ome to 'im in so many words, but we think he might 'ave saved us the font business. Now, in regard to that votin' business——'

'Chuck it! Oh, chuck it!' the sexton roared, 'or you'll 'ave me cuttin' my throat at cock-crow. 'Ere's another parcel of fun-makers!'

A motor-brake had pulled up at the door and a multitude of men and women immediately descended. We went out to look. They bore rolled banners, a reading-desk in three pieces, and, I specially noticed, a collapsible harmonium, such as is used on ships at sea.

'Salvation Army?' I said, though I saw no uniforms.

Two of them unfurled a banner between poles which bore the legend: 'The Earth *is* flat.' Woodhouse and I turned to Bat. He shook his head. 'No, no! Not

me. . . . If I had only seen their costumes in advance!'

'Good Lord!' said Ollyett. 'It's the genuine Society!'

The company advanced on the green with the precision of people well broke to these movements. Sceneshifters could not have been quicker with the three-piece rostrum, nor stewards with the harmonium. Almost before its cross-legs had been kicked into their catches, certainly before the tourists by the lodge-gates had begun to move over, a woman sat down to it and struck up a hymn:

Hear ther truth our tongues are telling,
Spread ther light from shore to shore,
God hath given man a dwelling
Flat and flat for evermore.

When ther Primal Dark retreated,
When ther deeps were undesigned,
He with rule and level meted
Habitation for mankind!

I saw sick envy on Bat's face. 'Curse Nature,' he muttered. 'She gets ahead of you every time. To think *I* forgot hymns and a harmonium!'

Then came the chorus:

Hear ther truth our tongues are telling,
Spread ther light from shore to shore—
Oh, be faithful! Oh, be truthful!
Earth is flat for evermore.

They sang several verses with the fervour of Christians awaiting their lions. Then there were growlings in the air. The sexton, embraced by the landlord, two-stepped out of the pub-door. Each was trying to outroar the other. 'Apologising in advarnce for what he says,' the landlord shouted: 'You'd better go away' (here the sexton began to speak words). 'This isn't the time nor yet the place for—for any more o' this chat.'

The crowd thickened. I saw the village police-sergeant come out of his cottage buckling his belt.

'But surely,' said the woman at the harmonium, 'there must be some mistake. We are not suffragettes.'

'Damn it! They'd be a change,' cried the sexton. 'You get out of this! Don't talk! *I* can't stand it for one! Get right out, or we'll font you!'

The crowd which was being recruited from every house in sight echoed the invitation. The sergeant pushed forward. A man beside the reading-desk said: 'But surely we are among dear friends and sympathisers. Listen to me for a moment.'

It was the moment that a passing char-à-banc chose to strike into The Song. The effect was instantaneous. Bat, Ollyett, and I, who by divers roads have learned the psychology of crowds, retreated towards the tavern door. Woodhouse, the newspaper proprietor, anxious, I presume, to keep touch with the public, dived into the thick of it. Every one else told the Society to go away at once. When the lady at the harmonium (I began to understand why it is sometimes necessary to kill women) pointed at the stencilled park pillars and called them 'the cromlechs of our common faith,' there was a snarl and a rush. The police-sergeant checked it, but advised the Society to keep on going. The Society

withdrew into the brake fighting, as it were, a rearguard action of oratory up each step. The collapsed harmonium was hauled in last, and with the perfect unreason of crowds, they cheered it loudly, till the chauffeur slipped in his clutch and sped away. Then the crowd broke up, congratulating all concerned except the sexton, who was held to have disgraced his office by having sworn at ladies. We strolled across the green towards Woodhouse, who was talking to the police-sergeant near the park-gates. We were not twenty yards from him when we saw Sir Thomas Ingell emerge from the lodge and rush furiously at Woodhouse with an uplifted stick, at the same time shrieking: 'I'll teach you to laugh, you——' but Ollyett has the record of the language. By the time we reached them, Sir Thomas was on the ground; Woodhouse, very white, held the walking-stick and was saying to the sergeant:

'I give this person in charge for assault.'

'But, good Lord!' said the sergeant, whiter than Woodhouse. 'It's Sir Thomas.'

'Whoever it is, it isn't fit to be at large,' said Woodhouse. The crowd suspecting something wrong began to reassemble, and all the English horror of a row in public moved us, headed by the sergeant, inside the lodge. We shut both park-gates and lodge-door.

'You saw the assault, sergeant,' Woodhouse went on. 'You can testify I used no more force than was necessary to protect myself. You can testify that I have not even damaged this person's property. (Here! take your stick, you!) You heard the filthy language he used.'

'I—I can't say I did,' the sergeant stammered.

'Oh, but *we* did!' said Ollyett, and repeated it, to the apron-veiled horror of the lodge-keeper's wife.

Sir Thomas on a hard kitchen chair began to talk. He said he had 'stood enough of being photographed like a wild beast,' and expressed loud regret that he had not killed 'that man,' who was 'conspiring with the sergeant to laugh at him.'

''Ad you ever seen 'im before, Sir Thomas?' the sergeant asked.

'No! But it's time an example was made here. I've never seen the sweep in my life.'

I think it was Bat Masquerier's magnetic eye that recalled the past to him, for his face changed and his jaw dropped. 'But I have!' he groaned. 'I remember now.'

Here a writhing man entered by the back door. He was, he said, the village solicitor. I do not assert that he licked Woodhouse's boots, but we should have respected him more if he had and been done with it. His notion was that the matter could be accommodated, arranged and compromised for gold, and yet more gold. The sergeant thought so too. Woodhouse undeceived them both. To the sergeant he said, 'Will you or will you not enter the charge?' To the village solicitor he gave the name of his lawyers, at which the man wrung his hands and cried, 'Oh, Sir T., Sir T.!' in a miserable falsetto, for it was a Bat Masquerier of a firm. They conferred together in tragic whispers.

'I don't dive after Dickens,' said Ollyett to Bat and me by the window, 'but every time *I* get into a row I notice the police-court always fills up with his characters.'

'I've noticed that too,' said Bat. 'But the odd thing is you mustn't give the public straight Dickens—not in My business. I wonder why that is.'

Then Sir Thomas got his second wind and cursed the day that he, or it may have been we, were born. I feared that though he was a Radical he might apologise and, since he was an M.P., might lie his way out of the difficulty. But he was utterly and truthfully beside himself. He asked foolish questions—such as what we were doing in the village at all, and how much blackmail Woodhouse expected to make out of him. But neither Woodhouse nor the sergeant nor the writhing solicitor listened. The upshot of their talk, in the chimney-corner, was that Sir Thomas stood engaged to appear next Monday before his brother magistrates on charges of assault, disorderly conduct, and language calculated, etc. Ollyett was specially careful about the language.

Then we left. The village looked very pretty in the late light—pretty and tuneful as a nest of nightingales.

'You'll turn up on Monday, I hope,' said Woodhouse, when we reached town. That was his only allusion to the affair.

So we turned up—through a world still singing that the Earth was flat—at the little clay-coloured market-town with the large Corn Exchange and the small Jubilee memorial. We had some difficulty in getting seats in the court. Woodhouse's imported London lawyer was a man of commanding personality, with a voice trained to convey blasting imputations by tone. When the case was called, he rose and stated his client's intention not to proceed with the charge. His client, he went on to say, had not entertained, and, of course, in the circumstances could not have entertained, any suggestion of accepting on behalf of public charities any moneys that might have been offered to him on the part of Sir Thomas's estate. At the same time, no one

acknowledged more sincerely than his client the spirit in which those offers had been made by those entitled to make them. But, as a matter of fact—here he became the man of the world colloguing with his equals—certain —er—details had come to his client's knowledge *since* the lamentable outburst, which . . . He shrugged his shoulders. Nothing was served by going into them, but he ventured to say that, had those painful circumstances only been known earlier, his client would—again 'of course'—never have dreamed—— A gesture concluded the sentence, and the ensnared Bench looked at Sir Thomas with new and withdrawing eyes. Frankly, as they could see, it would be nothing less than cruelty to proceed further with this—er—unfortunate affair. He asked leave, therefore, to withdraw the charge *in toto*, and at the same time to express his client's deepest sympathy with all who had been in any way distressed, as his client had been, by the fact and the publicity of proceedings which he could, of course, again assure them that his client would never have dreamed of instituting if, as he hoped he had made plain, certain facts had been before his client at the time when . . . But he had said enough. For his fee it seemed to me that he had.

Heaven inspired Sir Thomas's lawyer—all of a sweat lest his client's language should come out—to rise up and thank him. Then, Sir Thomas—not yet aware what leprosy had been laid upon him, but grateful to escape on any terms—followed suit. He was heard in interested silence, and people drew back a pace as Gehazi passed forth.

'You hit hard,' said Bat to Woodhouse afterwards. 'His own people think he's mad.'

'You don't say so? I'll show you some of his letters to-night at dinner,' he replied.

He brought them to the Red Amber Room of the Chop Suey. We forgot to be amazed, as till then we had been amazed, over the Song or 'The Gubby,' or the full tide of Fate that seemed to run only for our sakes. It did not even interest Ollyett that the verb 'to huckle' had passed into the English leader-writers' language. We were studying the interior of a soul, flash-lighted to its grimiest corners by the dread of 'losing its position.'

'And then it thanked you, didn't it, for dropping the case?' said Pallant.

'Yes, and it sent me a telegram to confirm.' Woodhouse turned to Bat. 'Now d'you think I hit too hard?' he asked.

'No—o!' said Bat. 'After all—I'm talking of every one's business now—one can't ever do anything in Art that comes up to Nature in any game in life. Just think how this thing has——'

'Just let me run through that little case of yours again,' said Pallant, and picked up *The Bun* which had it set out in full.

'Any chance of 'Dal looking in on us to-night?' Ollyett began.

'She's occupied with her Art too,' Bat answered bitterly. 'What's the use of Art? Tell me, some one!' A barrel-organ outside promptly pointed out that the *Earth* was flat. 'The gramophone's killing street organs, but I let loose a hundred-and-seventy-four of those hurdygurdys twelve hours after The Song,' said Bat. 'Not counting the Provinces.' His face brightened a little.

'Look here!' said Pallant over the paper. 'I don't

suppose you or those asinine J.P.'s knew it—but your lawyer ought to have known that you've all put your foot in it most confoundedly over this assault case.'

'What's the matter?' said Woodhouse.

'It's ludicrous. It's insane. There isn't two penn'orth of legality in the whole thing. Of course, you could have withdrawn the charge, but the way you went about it is childish—besides being illegal. What on earth was the Chief Constable thinking of?'

'Oh, he was a friend of Sir Thomas's. They all were for that matter,' I replied.

'He ought to be hanged. So ought the Chairman of the Bench. I'm talking as a lawyer now.'

'Why, what have we been guilty of? Misprision of treason or compounding a felony—or what?' said Ollyett.

'I'll tell you later.' Pallant went back to the paper with knitted brows, smiling unpleasantly from time to time. At last he laughed.

'Thank you!' he said to Woodhouse. 'It ought to be pretty useful—for us.'

'What d'you mean?' said Ollyett.

'For our side. They are all Rads who are mixed up in this—from the Chief Constable down. There must be a Question. There must be a Question.'

'Yes, but I wanted the charge withdrawn in my own way,' Woodhouse insisted.

'That's nothing to do with the case. It's the legality of your silly methods. You wouldn't understand if I talked till morning.' He began to pace the room, his hands behind him. 'I wonder if I can get it through our Whip's thick head that it's a chance. . . . That

comes of stuffing the Bench with radical tinkers,' he muttered.

'Oh, sit down!' said Woodhouse.

'Where's your lawyer to be found now?' he jerked out.

'At the Trefoil,' said Bat promptly. 'I gave him the stage-box for to-night. He's an artist too.'

'Then I'm going to see him,' said Pallant. 'Properly handled this ought to be a godsend for our side.' He withdrew without apology.

'Certainly, this thing keeps on opening up, and up,' I remarked inanely.

'It's beyond me!' said Bat. 'I don't think if I'd known I'd have ever . . . Yes, I would, though. He said my home address was——'

'It was his tone—his tone!' Ollyett almost shouted. Woodhouse said nothing, but his face whitened as he brooded.

'Well, any way,' Bat went on, 'I'm glad I always believed in God and Providence and all those things. Else I should lose my nerve. We've put it over the whole world—the full extent of the geographical globe. We couldn't stop it if we wanted to now. It's got to burn itself out. I'm not in charge any more. What d'you expect 'll happen next. Angels?'

I expected nothing. Nothing that I expected approached what I got. Politics are not my concern, but, for the moment, since it seemed that they were going to 'huckle' with the rest, I took an interest in them. They impressed me as a dog's life without a dog's decencies, and I was confirmed in this when an unshaven and unwashen Pallant called on me at ten o'clock one morning, begging for a bath and a couch.

'Bail too?' I asked. He was in evening dress and his eyes were sunk feet in his head.

'No,' he said hoarsely. 'All night sitting. Fifteen divisions. 'Nother to-night. Your place was nearer than mine, so——' He began to undress in the hall.

When he awoke at one o'clock he gave me lurid accounts of what he said was history, but which was obviously collective hysteria. There had been a political crisis. He and his fellow M.P.'s had 'done things'—I never quite got at the things—for eighteen hours on end, and the pitiless Whips were even then at the telephones to herd 'em up to another dog-fight. So he snorted and grew hot all over again while he might have been resting.

'I'm going to pitch in my question about that miscarriage of justice at Huckley this afternoon, if you care to listen to it,' he said. 'It'll be absolutely thrown away—in our present state. I told 'em so; but it's my only chance for weeks. P'raps Woodhouse would like to come.'

'I'm sure he would. Anything to do with Huckley interests us,' I said.

'It'll miss fire, I'm afraid. Both sides are absolutely cooked. The present situation has been working up for some time. You see the row was bound to come, etc., etc.,' and he flew off the handle once more.

I telephoned to Woodhouse, and we went to the House together. It was a dull, sticky afternoon with thunder in the air. For some reason or other, each side was determined to prove its virtue and endurance to the utmost. I heard men snarling about it all round me. 'If they won't spare us, we'll show 'em no mercy.' 'Break the brutes up from the start. They can't stand late hours.' 'Come on! No shirking! I know *you*'ve

had a Turkish bath,' were some of the sentences I caught on our way. The House was packed already, and one could feel the negative electricity of a jaded crowd wrenching at one's own nerves, and depressing the afternoon soul.

'This is bad!' Woodhouse whispered. 'There'll be a row before they've finished. Look at the Front Benches!' And he pointed out little personal signs by which I was to know that each man was on edge. He might have spared himself. The House was ready to snap before a bone had been thrown. A sullen minister rose to reply to a staccato question. His supporters cheered defiantly. 'None o' that! None o' that!' came from the Back Benches. I saw the Speaker's face stiffen like the face of a helmsman as he humours a hard-mouthed yacht after a sudden following sea. The trouble was barely met in time. There came a fresh, apparently causeless gust a few minutes later—savage, threatening, but futile. It died out—one could hear the sigh—in sudden wrathful realisation of the dreary hours ahead, and the ship of state drifted on.

Then Pallant—and the raw House winced at the torture of his voice—rose. It was a twenty-line question, studded with legal technicalities. The gist of it was that he wished to know whether the appropriate Minister was aware that there had been a grave miscarriage of justice on such and such a date, at such and such a place, before such and such justices of the peace, in regard to a case which arose——

I heard one desperate, weary 'damn!' float up from the pit of that torment. Pallant sawed on—'out of certain events which occurred at the village of Huckley.'

The House came to attention with a parting of the lips

like a hiccough, and it flashed through my mind. . . . Pallant repeated, 'Huckley. The village——'

'That voted the *Earth* was flat.' A single voice from a back Bench sang it once like a lone frog in a far pool.

'*Earth* was flat,' croaked another voice opposite.

'*Earth* was flat.' There were several. Then several more.

It was, you understand, the collective, over-strained nerve of the House, snapping, strand by strand to various notes, as the hawser parts from its moorings.

'The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat.' The tune was beginning to shape itself. More voices were raised and feet began to beat time. Even so it did not occur to me that the thing would——

'The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat!' It was easier now to see who were not singing. There were still a few. Of a sudden (and this proves the fundamental instability of the cross-bench mind) a cross-bencher leaped on his seat and there played an imaginary double-bass with tremendous maestro-like wagglings of the elbow.

The last strand parted. The ship of state drifted out helpless on the rocking tide of melody.

'The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat!
The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat!'

The Irish first conceived the idea of using their order-papers as funnels wherewith to reach the correct '*vroom —vroom*' on '*Earth*.' Labour, always conservative and respectable at a crisis, stood out longer than any other section, but when it came in it was howling syndicalism. Then, without distinction of Party, fear of constituents,

desire for office, or hope of emolument, the House sang at the tops and at the bottoms of their voices, swaying their stale bodies and epileptically beating with their swelled feet. They sang 'The Village that voted the *Earth* was flat': first, because they wanted to, and secondly—which is the terror of that song—because they could not stop. For no consideration could they stop.

Pallant was still standing up. Some one pointed at him and they laughed. Others began to point, lunging, as it were, in time with the tune. At this moment two persons came in practically abreast from behind the Speaker's chair, and halted appalled. One happened to be the Prime Minister and the other a messenger. The House, with tears running down their cheeks, transferred their attention to the paralysed couple. They pointed six hundred forefingers at them. They rocked, they waved, and they rolled while they pointed, but still they sang. When they weakened for an instant, Ireland would yell: 'Are ye *with* me, bhoys?' and they all renewed their strength like Antaeus. No man could say afterwards what happened in the Press or the Strangers' Gallery. It was the House, the hysterical and abandoned House of Commons that held all eyes, as it deafened all ears. I saw both Front Benches bend forward, some with their foreheads on their despatch-boxes, the rest with their faces in their hands; and their moving shoulders jolted the House out of its last rag of decency. Only the Speaker remained unmoved. The entire press of Great Britain bore witness next day that he had not even bowed his head. The Angel of the Constitution, for vain was the help of man, foretold him the exact moment at which the House would have broken into

'The Gubby.' He is reported to have said: 'I heard the Irish beginning to shuffle it. So I adjourned.' Pallant's version is that he added: 'And I was never so grateful to a private member in all my life as I was to Mr. Pallant.'

He made no explanation. He did not refer to orders or disorders. He simply adjourned the House till six that evening. And the House adjourned—some of it nearly on all fours.

I was not correct when I said that the Speaker was the only man who did not laugh. Woodhouse was beside me all the time. His face was set and quite white—as white, they told me, as Sir Thomas Ingell's when he went, by request, to a private interview with his Chief Whip.

THE PRESS

The Soldier may forget his sword,
  The Sailorman the sea,
The Mason may forget the Word
  And the Priest his litany:
The maid may forget both jewel and gem,
  And the bride her wedding-dress—
But the Jew shall forget Jerusalem
  Ere we forget the Press!

Who once hath stood through the loaded hour
  Ere, roaring like the gale,
The Harrild and the Hoe devour
  Their league-long paper bale,
And has lit his pipe in the morning calm
  That follows the midnight stress—
He hath sold his heart to the old Black Art
  We call the daily Press.

Who once hath dealt in the wildest game
  That all of a man can play,
No later love, no larger fame
  Will lure him long away.
As the war-horse smelleth the battle afar,
  The entered Soul, no less,
He saith: 'Ha! Ha!' where the trumpets are
  And the thunders of the Press.

Canst thou number the days that we fulfil,
  Or the *Times* that we bring forth?
Canst thou send the lightnings to do thy will,
  And cause them reign on earth?
Hast thou given a peacock goodly wings
  To please his foolishness?
Sit down at the heart of men and things,
  Companion of the Press!

The Pope may launch his Interdict,
  The Union its decree,
But the bubble is blown and the bubble is pricked
  By Us and such as We.
Remember the battle and stand aside
  While Thrones and Powers confess
That King over all the children of pride
  Is the Press—the Press—the Press!

IN THE PRESENCE

(1912)

'SO the matter,' the Regimental Chaplain concluded, 'was correct; in every way correct. I am well pleased with Rutton Singh and Attar Singh. They have gathered the fruit of their lives.'

He folded his arms and sat down on the verandah. The hot day had ended, and there was a pleasant smell of cooking along the regimental lines, where half-clad men went back and forth with leaf platters and water-goglets. The Subadar-Major, in extreme undress, sat on a chair, as befitted his rank; the Havildar-Major, his nephew, leaning respectfully against the wall. The Regiment was at home and at ease in its own quarters in its own district which takes its name from the great Muhammadan saint Mian Mir, revered by Jehangir and beloved by Guru Har Gobind, sixth of the great Sikh Gurus.

'Quite correct,' the Regimental Chaplain repeated.

No Sikh contradicts his Regimental Chaplain who expounds to him the Holy Book of the Grunth Sahib and who knows the lives and legends of all the Gurus.

The Subadar-Major bowed his grey head. The Havildar-Major coughed respectfully to attract attention and to ask leave to speak. Though he was the Subadar-Major's nephew, and though his father held

twice as much land as his uncle, he knew his place in the scheme of things. The Subadar-Major shifted one hand with an iron bracelet on the wrist.

'Was there by any chance any woman at the back of it?' the Havildar-Major murmured. 'I was not here when the thing happened.'

'Yes! Yes! Yes! We all know that thou wast in England eating and drinking with the Sahibs. We are all surprised that thou canst still speak Punjabi.' The Subadar-Major's carefully-tended beard bristled.

'There was no woman,' the Regimental Chaplain growled. 'It was land. Hear, you! Rutton Singh and Attar Singh were the elder of four brothers. These four held land in—what was the village's name?—oh, Pishapur, near Thori, in the Banalu Tehsil of Patiala State, where men can still recognise right behaviour when they see it. The two younger brothers tilled the land, while Rutton Singh and Attar Singh took service with the Regiment, according to the custom of the family.'

'True, true,' said the Havildar-Major. 'There is the same arrangement in all good families.'

'Then, listen again,' the Regimental Chaplain went on. 'Their kin on their mother's side put great oppression and injustice upon the two younger brothers who stayed with the land in Patiala State. Their mother's kin loosened beasts into the four brothers' crops when the crops were green; they cut the corn by force when it was ripe; they broke down the water-courses; they defiled the wells; and they brought false charges in the law-courts against all four brothers. They did not spare even the cotton-seed, as the saying is.

'Their mother's kin trusted that the young men

would thus be forced by weight of trouble, and further trouble and perpetual trouble, to quit their lands in Pishapur village in Banalu Tehsil in Patiala State. If the young men ran away, the land would come whole to their mother's kin. I am not a regimental schoolmaster, but is it understood, child?'

'Understood,' said the Havildar-Major grimly. 'Pishapur is not the only place where the fence eats the field instead of protecting it. But perhaps there was a woman among their mother's kin?'

'God knows!' said the Regimental Chaplain. 'Woman, or man, or law-courts, the young men would *not* be driven off the land which was their own by inheritance. They made appeal to Rutton Singh and Attar Singh, their brethren who had taken service with *us* in the Regiment, and so knew the world, to help them in their long war against their mother's kin in Pishapur. For that reason, because their own land and the honour of their house was dear to them, Rutton Singh and Attar Singh needs must very often ask for leave to go to Patiala and attend to the lawsuits and cattle-poundings there.

'It was not, look you, as though they went back to their own village and sat, garlanded with jasmine, in honour, upon chairs before the elders under the trees. They went back always to perpetual trouble, either of lawsuits, or theft, or strayed cattle; and they sat on thorns.'

'I knew it,' said the Subadar-Major. 'Life was bitter for them both. But they were well-conducted men. It was not hard to get them their leave from the Colonel Sahib.'

'They spoke to me also,' said the Chaplain. "*Let*

him who desires the four great gifts apply himself to the words of holy men." That is written. Often they showed me the papers of the false lawsuits brought against them. Often they wept on account of the persecution put upon them by their mother's kin. Men thought it was drugs when their eyes showed red.'

'They wept in my presence too,' said the Subadar-Major. 'Well-conducted men of nine years' service apiece. Rutton Singh was drill-Naik, too.'

'They did all things correctly as Sikhs should,' said the Regimental Chaplain. 'When the persecution had endured seven years, Attar Singh took leave to Pishapur once again (that was the fourth time in that year only) and he called his persecutors together before the village elders, and he cast his turban at their feet and besought them by his mother's blood to cease from their persecutions. For he told them earnestly that he had marched to the boundaries of his patience, and that there could be but one end to the matter.

'They gave him abuse. They mocked him and his tears, which was the same as though they had mocked the Regiment. Then Attar Singh returned to the Regiment, and laid this last trouble before Rutton Singh, the eldest brother. But Rutton Singh could not get leave all at once.'

'Because he was drill-Naik and the recruits were to be drilled. I myself told him so,' said the Subadar-Major. 'He was a well-conducted man. He said he could wait.'

'But when permission was granted, those two took four days' leave,' the Chaplain went on.

'I do not think Attar Singh should have taken Baynes Sahib's revolver. He was Baynes Sahib's orderly, and all that Sahib's things were open to him. It

was, therefore, as I count it, shame to Attar Singh,' said the Subadar-Major.

'All the words had been said. There was need of arms, and how could soldiers use Government rifles upon mere cultivators in the fields?' the Regimental Chaplain replied. 'Moreover, the revolver was sent back, together with a money-order for the cartridges expended. "*Borrow not; but if thou borrowest, pay back soon!*" That is written in the Hymns. Rutton Singh took a sword, and he and Attar Singh went to Pishapur and, after word given, the four brethren fell upon their persecutors in Pishapur village and slew seventeen, wounding ten. A revolver is better than a lawsuit. I say that these four brethren, the two with *us*, and the two mere cultivators, slew and wounded twenty-seven —all their mother's kin, male and female.

'Then the four mounted to their housetop, and Attar Singh, who was always one of the impetuous, said "My work is done," and he made *shinan* (purification) in all men's sight, and he lent Rutton Singh Baynes Sahib's revolver, and Rutton Singh shot him in the head.

'So Attar Singh abandoned his body, as an insect abandons a blade of grass. But Rutton Singh, having more work to do, went down from the housetop and sought an enemy whom he had forgotten—a Patiala man of this regiment who had sided with the persecutors. When he overtook the man, Rutton Singh hit him twice with bullets and once with the sword.'

'But the man escaped and is now in the hospital here,' said the Subadar-Major. 'The doctor says he will live in spite of all.'

'Not Rutton Singh's fault. Rutton Singh left him for dead. Then Rutton Singh returned to the house-

top, and the three brothers together, Attar Singh being dead, sent word by a lad to the police station for an army to be dispatched against them that they might die with honours. But none came. And yet Patiala State is not under English law and they should know virtue there when they see it!

'So, on the third day, Rutton Singh also made *shinan*, and the youngest of the brethren shot him also in the head, and *he* abandoned his body.

'Thus was all correct. There was neither heat, nor haste, nor abuse in the matter from end to end. There remained alive not one man or woman of their mother's kin which had oppressed them. Of the other villagers of Pishapur, who had taken no part in the persecutions, not one was slain. Indeed, the villagers sent them food on the housetop for those three days while they waited for the police who would not dispatch that army.

'Listen again! I know that Attar Singh and Rutton Singh omitted no ceremony of the purifications, and when all was done Baynes Sahib's revolver was thrown down from the housetop, together with three rupees twelve annas; and order was given for its return by post.'

'And what befell the two younger brethren who were not in the service?' the Havildar-Major asked.

'Doubtless they too are dead, but since they were not in the Regiment their honour concerns themselves only. So far as *we* were touched, see how correctly we came out of the matter! I think the King should be told; for where could you match such a tale except among us Sikhs? *Sri wah guru ji ki Khalsa! Sri wah guru ji ki futteh!*' said the Regimental Chaplain.

'Would three rupees twelve annas pay for the used cartridges?' said the Havildar-Major.

'Attar Singh knew the just price. All Baynes Sahib's gear was in his charge. They expended one tin box of fifty cartouches, lacking two which were returned. As I said—as I say—the arrangement was made not with heat nor blasphemies as a Mussulman would have made it; not with cries nor caperings as an idolater would have made it; but conformably to the ritual and doctrine of the Sikhs. Hear you! "*Though hundreds of amusements are offered to a child it cannot live without milk. If a man be divorced from his soul and his soul's desire he certainly will not stop to play upon the road, but he will make haste with his pilgrimage.*" That is written. I rejoice in my disciples.'

'True! True! Correct! Correct!' said the Subadar-Major. There was a long, easy silence. One heard a water-wheel creaking somewhere and the nearer sound of meal being ground in a quern.

'But he'— the Chaplain pointed a scornful chin at the Havildar-Major—'*he* has been so long in England that——'

'Let the lad alone,' said his uncle. 'He was but two months there, and he was chosen for good cause.'

Theoretically, all Sikhs are equal. Practically, there are differences, as none know better than well-born, land-owning folk, or long-descended chaplains from Amritsar.

'Hast thou heard anything in England to match my tale?' the Chaplain sneered.

'I saw more than I could understand, so I have locked up my stories in my own mouth,' the Havildar-Major replied meekly.

'Stories? What stories? I know all the stories about England,' said the Chaplain. 'I know that

terains run underneath their bazaars there, and as for their streets stinking with *mota-kahars*, only this morning I was nearly killed by Duggan Sahib's *mota-kahar*. That young man is a devil.'

'I expect Grunthi-jee,' said the Subadar-Major, 'you and I grow too old to care for the Kahar-ki-nautch—the Bearer's dance.' He named one of the sauciest of the old-time nautches, and smiled at his own pun. Then he turned to his nephew. 'When I was a lad and came back to my village on leave, I waited the convenient hour, and, the elders giving permission, I spoke of what I had seen elsewhere.'

'Ay, my father,' said the Havildar-Major, softly and affectionately. He sat himself down with respect, as behoved a mere lad of thirty with a bare half-dozen campaigns to his credit.

'There were four men in this affair also,' he began, 'and it was an affair that touched the honour, not of one regiment, nor two, but of all the Army in Hind. Some part of it I saw; some I heard; but *all* the tale is true. My father's brother knows, and my priest knows, that I was in England on business with my Colonel, when the King—the Great Queen's son—completed his life.

'First, there was a rumour that sickness was upon him. Next, we knew that he lay sick in the Palace. A very great multitude stood outside the Palace by night and by day, in the rain as well as the sun, waiting for news.

'Then came out one with a written paper, and set it upon a gate-side—the word of the King's death—and they read, and groaned. This I saw with my own eyes, because the office where my Colonel Sahib went daily

to talk with Colonel Forsyth Sahib was at the east end of the very gardens where the Palace stood. They are larger gardens than Shalimar here'—he pointed with his chin up the lines—'or Shahdera across the river.

'Next day there was a darkness in the streets, because all the city's multitude were clad in black garments, and they spoke as a man speaks in the presence of his dead—all those multitudes. In the eyes, in the air, and in the heart, there was blackness. I saw it. But that is not my tale.

'After ceremonies had been accomplished, and word had gone out to the Kings of the Earth that they should come and mourn, the new King —the dead King's son— gave commandment that his father's body should be laid, coffined, in a certain Temple which is near the river. There are no idols in that Temple; neither any carvings, nor paintings, nor gildings. It is all grey stone, of one colour as though it were cut out of the live rock. It is larger than—yes, than the Durbar Sahib at Amritsar, even though the Akal Bunga and the Baba-Atal were added. How old it may be God knows. It is the Sahibs' most sacred Temple.

'In that place, by the new King's commandment, they made, as it were, a shrine for a saint, with lighted candles at the head and the feet of the Dead, and duly appointed watchers for every hour of the day and the night, until the dead King should be taken to the place of his fathers, which is at Wanidza.

'When all was in order, the new King said, "Give entrance to all people," and the doors were opened, and O my uncle! O my teacher! all the world entered, walking through that Temple to take farewell of the Dead. There was neither distinction, nor price, nor ranking in

the host, except an order that they should walk by fours.

'As they gathered in the streets without—very, very far off—so they entered the Temple, walking by fours: the child, the old man; mother, virgin, harlot, trader, priest; of all colours and faiths and customs under the firmament of God, from dawn till late at night. I saw it. My Colonel gave me leave to go. I stood in the line, many hours, one *koss*, two *koss*, distant from the temple.'

'Then why did the multitude not sit down under the trees?' asked the priest.

'Because we were still between houses. The city is many *koss* wide,' the Havildar-Major resumed. 'I submitted myself to that slow-moving river and thus—thus—a pace at a time—I made pilgrimage. There were in my rank a woman, a cripple, and a lascar from the ships.

'When we entered the Temple, the coffin itself was as a shoal in the Ravi River, splitting the stream into two branches, one on either side of the Dead; and the watchers of the Dead, who were soldiers, stood about It, moving no more than the still flame of the candles. Their heads were bowed; their hands were clasped; their eyes were cast upon the ground—thus. They were not men, but images, and the multitude went past them in fours by day, and, except for a little while, by night also.

'No, there was no order that the people should come to pay respect. It was a free-will pilgrimage. Eight kings had been commanded to come—who obeyed—but upon his own Sahibs the new King laid no commandment. Of themselves they came.

'I made pilgrimage twice: once for my Salt's sake,

and once again for wonder and terror and worship. But my mouth cannot declare one thing of a hundred thousand things in this matter. There were *lakhs* of *lakhs*, *crores* of *crores* of people. I saw them.'

'More than at our great pilgrimages?' the Regimental Chaplain demanded.

'Yes. Those are only cities and districts coming out to pray. This was the world walking in grief. And now, hear you! It is the King's custom that four swords of Our Armies in Hind should stand always before the Presence in case of need.'

'The King's custom, our right,' said the Subadar-Major curtly.

'Also our right. These honoured ones are changed after certain months or years, that the honour may be fairly spread. Now it chanced that when the old King —the Queen's son—completed his days, the four that stood in the Presence were Goorkhas. Neither Sikhs alas, nor Pathans, Rajputs, nor Jats. Goorkhas, my father.'

'Idolaters,' said the Chaplain.

'But soldiers; for I remember in the Tirah——' the Havildar-Major began.

'*But* soldiers, for I remember fifteen campaigns. Go on,' said the Subadar-Major.

'And it was their honour and right to furnish one who should stand in the Presence by day and by night till It went out to burial. There were no more than four all told—four old men to furnish that guard.'

'Old? Old? What talk is this of old men?' said the Subadar-Major.

'Nay. My fault! Your pardon!' The Havildar-Major spread a deprecating hand. 'They were strong,

hot, valiant men, and the youngest was a lad of forty-five.'

'That is better,' the Subadar-Major laughed.

'But for all their strength and heat they could not eat strange food from the Sahibs' hands. There was no cooking place in the Temple; but a certain Colonel Forsyth Sahib, who had understanding, made arrangement whereby they should receive at least a little caste-clean parched grain; also cold rice maybe, and water which was pure. Yet, at best, this was no more than a hen's mouthful, snatched as each came off his guard. They lived on grain and were thankful, as the saying is.

'One hour's guard in every four was each man's burden, for, as I have shown, they were but four all told; and the honour of Our Armies in Hind was on their heads. The Sahibs could draw upon all the armies in England for the other watchers—thousands upon thousands of fresh men—if they needed; but these four were but four.

'The Sahibs drew upon the Granadeers for the other watchers. Granadeers be very tall men under very tall bearskins, such as Fusilier regiments wear in cold weather. Thus, when a Granadeer bowed his head but a very little over his stock, the bearskin sloped and showed as though he grieved exceedingly. Now the Goorkhas wear flat, green caps——'

'I see, I see,' said the Subadar-Major impatiently.

'They are bull-necked, too; and their stocks are hard, and when they bend deeply—deeply—to match the Granadeers—they come nigh to choking themselves. That was a handicap against them, when it came to the observance of ritual.

'Yet even with their tall, grief-declaring bearskins,

the Granadeers could not endure the full hour's guard in the Presence. There was good cause, as I will show, why no man could endure that terrible hour. So for them the hour's guard was cut to one-half. What did it matter to the Sahibs? They could draw on ten thousand Granadeers. Forsyth Sahib, who had comprehension, put this choice also before the four, and they said, "No, ours is the Honour of the Armies of Hind. Whatever the Sahibs do, we will suffer the full hour."

'Forsyth Sahib, seeing that they were—knowing that they could neither sleep long nor eat much, said, "Is it great suffering?" They said, "It is great honour. We will endure."

'Forsyth Sahib, who loves us, said then to the eldest, "Ho, father, tell me truly what manner of burden it is; for the full hour's watch breaks up our men like water."

'The eldest answered, "Sahib, the burden is the feet of the multitude that pass us on either side. Our eyes being lowered and fixed, we see those feet only from the knee down—a river of feet, Sahib, that never—never—never stops. It is not the standing without any motion; it is not hunger; nor is it the dead part before the dawn when maybe a single one comes here to weep. It is the burden of the unendurable procession of feet from the knee down, that never—never—never stops!"

'Forsyth Sahib said, "By God, I had not considered that! Now I know why our men come trembling and twitching off that guard. But at least, my father, ease the stock a little beneath the bent chin for that one hour."

'The eldest said, "We are in the Presence. Moreover *He* knew every button and braid and hook of every uniform in all His armies."

'Then Forsyth Sahib said no more, except to speak about their parched grain, but indeed they could not eat much after their hour, nor could they sleep much because of eye-twitchings and the renewed procession of the feet before the eyes. Yet they endured each his full hour—not half an hour—his one full hour in each four hours.'

'Correct! correct!' said the Subadar-Major and the Chaplain together. 'We come well out of this affair.'

'But seeing that they were old men,' said the Subadar-Major reflectively, 'very old men, worn out by lack of food and sleep, could not arrangements have been made, or influence have been secured, or a petition presented, whereby a well-born Sikh might have eased them of some portion of their great burden, even though his substantive rank——'

'Then they would most certainly have slain me,' said the Havildar-Major with a smile.

'And they would have done correctly,' said the Chaplain. 'What befell the honourable ones later?'

'This. The Kings of the earth and all the Armies sent flowers and such-like to the dead King's palace at Wanidza, where the funeral offerings were accepted. There was no order given, but all the world made oblation. So the four took counsel—three at a time—and either they asked Forsyth Sahib to choose flowers, or themselves they went forth and bought flowers—I do not know; but, however it was arranged, the flowers were bought and made in the shape of a great drum-like circle weighing half a *maund*.

'Forsyth Sahib had said, "Let the flowers be sent to Wanidza with the other flowers which all the world is sending." But they said among themselves, "It is not

fit that these flowers, which are the offerings of His Armies in Hind, should come to the Palace of the Presence by the hands of hirelings or messengers, or of any man not in His service."

'Hearing this, Forsyth Sahib, though he was much occupied with office-work, said, "Give me the flowers, and I will steal a time and myself take them to Wanidza."

'The eldest said, "Since when has Forsyth Sahib worn sword?"

'Forsyth Sahib said, "But always. And I wear it in the Presence when I put on uniform. I am a Colonel in the Armies of Hind." The eldest said, "Of what regiment?" And Forsyth Sahib looked on the carpet and pulled the hair of his lip. He saw the trap.'

'Forsyth Sahib's regiment was once the old Forty-sixth Pathans which was called——' the Subadar-Major gave the almost forgotten title, adding that he had met them in such and such campaigns, when Forsyth Sahib was a young captain.

The Havildar-Major took up the tale, saying, 'The eldest knew that also, my father. He laughed, and presently Forsyth Sahib laughed.

'"It is true," said Forsyth Sahib. "I have no regiment. For twenty years I have been a clerk tied to a thick pen. Therefore I am the more fit to be your orderly and messenger in this business."

'The eldest then said, "If it were a matter of my life or the honour of *any* of my household, it would be easy." And Forsyth Sahib joined his hands together, half laughing, though he was ready to weep, and he said, "Enough! I ask pardon. Which one of you goes with the offering?"

'The eldest said, feigning not to have heard, "Nor must they be delivered by a single sword—as though we were pressed for men in His service," and they saluted and went out.'

'Were these things seen, or were they told thee?' said the Subadar-Major.

'I both saw and heard in the office full of books and papers where my Colonel Sahib consulted Forsyth Sahib upon the business that had brought my Colonel Sahib to England.'

'And what was that business?' the Regimental Chaplain asked of a sudden, looking full at the Havildar-Major, who returned the look without a quiver.

'That was not revealed to me,' said the Havildar-Major.

'I heard it might have been some matter touching the integrity of certain regiments,' the Chaplain insisted.

'The matter was not in any way open to my ears,' said the Havildar-Major.

'Humph!' The Chaplain drew his hard road-worn feet under his robe. 'Let us hear the tale that it is permitted thee to tell,' he said, and the Havildar-Major went on:

'So then the three, having returned to the Temple, called the fourth, who had only forty-five years, when he came off guard, and said, "We go to the Palace at Wanidza with the offerings. Remain thou in the Presence, and take all our guards, one after the other, till we return."

'Within that next hour they hired a large and strong *mota-kahar* for the journey from the Temple to Wanidza, which is twenty *koss* or more, and they promised expedition. But he who took their guards said, "It is not

seemly that we should for any cause appear to be in haste. There are eighteen medals with eleven clasps and three Orders to consider. Go at leisure. I can endure."

'So the three with the offerings were absent three hours and a half, and having delivered the offering at Wanidza in the correct manner they returned and found the lad on guard, and they did not break his guard till his full hour was ended. So *he* endured four hours in the Presence, not stirring one hair, his eyes abased, and the river of feet, from the knee down, passing continually before his eyes. When he was relieved, it was seen that his eyeballs worked like weavers' shuttles.

'And so it was done—not in hot blood, not for a little while, nor yet with the smell of slaughter and the noise of shouting to sustain, but in silence, for a very long time, rooted to one place before the Presence among the most terrible feet of the multitude.'

'Correct!' the Chaplain chuckled.

'But the Goorkhas had the honour,' said the Subadar-Major sadly.

'Theirs was the Honour of His Armies in Hind, and that was Our Honour,' the nephew replied.

'Yet I would one Sikh had been concerned in it—even one low-caste Sikh. And after?'

'They endured the burden until the end—until It went out of the Temple to be laid among the older kings at Wanidza. When all was accomplished and It was withdrawn under the earth, Forsyth Sahib said to the four, "The King gives command that you be fed here on meat cooked by your own cooks. Eat and take ease, my fathers."

'So they loosed their belts and ate. They had not

eaten food except by snatches for some long time; and when the meat had given them strength they slept for very many hours; and it was told me that the procession of the unendurable feet ceased to pass before their eyes any more.'

He threw out one hand palm upward to show that the tale was ended.

'We came well and cleanly out of it,' said the Subadar-Major.

'Correct! Correct! Correct!' said the Regimental Chaplain. 'In an evil age it is good to hear such things, and there is certainly no doubt that this is a very evil age.'

JOBSON'S AMEN

'Blessed be the English and all their ways and works.
Cursed be the Infidels, Hereticks, and Turks!'
'Amen,' quo' Jobson, 'but where I used to lie
Was neither Candle, Bell nor Book to curse my brethren by:

'But a palm-tree in full bearing, bowing down, bowing down,
To a surf that drove unsparing at the brown-walled town—
Conches in a temple, oil-lamps in a dome—
And a low moon out of Africa said: "This way home!"'

'Blessed be the English and all that they profess.
Cursed be the Savages that prance in nakedness!'
'Amen,' quo' Jobson, 'but where I used to lie
Was neither shirt nor pantaloons to catch my brethren by:

'But a well-wheel slowly creaking, going round, going round,
By a water-channel leaking over drowned, warm ground—
Parrots very busy in the trellised pepper-vine—
And a high sun over Asia shouting: "Rise and shine!"'

'Blessed be the English and everything they own.
Cursed be the Infidels that bow to wood and stone!'
'Amen,' quo' Jobson, 'but where I used to lie
Was neither pew nor Gospelleer to save my brethren by:

'But a desert stretched and stricken, left and right, left and right,
Where the piled mirages thicken under white-hot light—
A skull beneath a sand-hill and a viper coiled inside—
And a red wind out of Libya roaring: "Run and hide!"'

'Blessed be the English and all they make or do.
Cursed be the Hereticks who doubt that this is true!'
'Amen,' quo' Jobson, 'but where I mean to die
Is neither rule nor calliper to judge the matter by:

'But Himalaya heavenward-heading, sheer and vast, sheer and vast,
In a million summits bedding on the last world's past;
A certain sacred mountain where the scented cedars climb,
And—the feet of my Beloved hurrying back through Time!'

REGULUS

(1908)

Regulus, a Roman general, defeated the Carthaginians 256 B.C., but was next year defeated and taken prisoner by the Carthaginians, who sent him to Rome with an embassy to ask for peace or an exchange of prisoners. Regulus strongly advised the Roman Senate to make no terms with the enemy. He then returned to Carthage and was put to death.

THE Fifth Form had been dragged several times in its collective life, from one end of the school Horace to the other. Those were the years when Army examiners gave thousands of marks for Latin, and it was Mr. King's hated business to defeat them.

Hear him, then, on a raw November morning at second lesson.

'Aha!' he began, rubbing his hands. '*Cras ingens iterabimus aequor.* Our portion to-day is the Fifth Ode of the Third Book, I believe—concerning one Regulus, a gentleman. And how often have we been through it?'

'Twice, sir,' said Malpass, head of the Form.

Mr. King shuddered. 'Yes, twice, quite literally,' he said. 'To-day, with an eye to your Army *viva-voce* examinations—ugh!—I shall exact somewhat freer and

more florid renditions. With feeling and comprehension if that be possible. I except'—here his eye swept the back benches—'our friend and companion Beetle, from whom, now as always, I demand an absolutely literal translation.' The form laughed subserviently.

'Spare his blushes! Beetle charms us first.'

Beetle stood up, confident in the possession of a guaranteed construe, left behind by M'Turk, who had that day gone into the sick-house with a cold. Yet he was too wary a hand to show confidence.

'*Credidimus*, we—believe—we have believed,' he opened in hesitating slow time, '*tonantem Jovem*, thundering Jove—*regnare*, to reign—*caelo*, in heaven. *Augustus*, Augustus—*habebitur*, will be held or considered—*praesens divus*, a present God—*adjectis Britannis*, the Britons being added—*imperio*, to the Empire—*gravibusque Persis*, with the heavy—er, stern Persians.'

'What?'

'The grave or stern Persians.' Beetle pulled up with the 'Thank-God-I-have-done-my-duty' air of Nelson in the cockpit.

'I am quite aware,' said King, 'that the first stanza is about the extent of your knowledge, but continue, sweet one, continue. *Gravibus*, by the way, is usually translated as "troublesome."'

Beetle drew a long and tortured breath. The second stanza (which carries over to the third) of that Ode is what is technically called a 'stinker.' But M'Turk had done him handsomely.

'*Milesne Crassi*, had—has the soldier of Crassus—*vixit*, lived—*turpis maritus*, a disgraceful husband——'

'You slurred the quantity of the word after *turpis*,' said King. 'Let's hear it.'

Beetle guessed again, and for a wonder hit the correct quantity. 'Er—a disgraceful husband—*conjuge barbara*, with a barbarous spouse.'

'Why do you select *that* disgustful equivalent out of all the dictionary?' King snapped. 'Isn't "wife" good enough for you?'

'Yes, sir. But what do I do about this bracket, sir? Shall I take it now?'

'Confine yourself at present to the soldier of Crassus.'

'Yes, sir. *Et*, and—*consenuit*, has he grown old—*in armis*, in the—er—arms—*hostium socerorum*, of his father-in-law's enemies.'

'Who? How? Which?'

'Arms of his enemies' fathers-in-law, sir.'

'Tha-anks. By the way, what meaning might you attach to *in armis ?*'

'Oh, weapons—weapons of war, sir.' There was a virginal note in Beetle's voice as though he had been falsely accused of uttering indecencies. 'Shall I take the bracket now, sir?'

'Since it seems to be troubling you.'

'*Pro Curia*, O for the Senate House—*inversique mores*, and manners upset—upside down.'

'Ve-ry like your translation. Meantime, the soldier of Crassus?'

'*Sub rege Medo*, under a Median King—*Marsus et Apulus*, he being a Marsian and an Apulian.'

'Who? The Median King?'

'No, sir. The soldier of Crassus. *Oblitus* agrees with *milesne Crassi*, sir,' volunteered too hasty Beetle.

'Does it? It doesn't with *me*.'

'*Oh-blight-us*,' Beetle corrected hastily, 'forgetful—*anciliorum*, of the shields, or trophies—*et nominis*, and

the—his name—*et togae*, and the toga—*eternaeque Vestae*, and eternal Vesta—*incolumi Jove*, Jove being safe—*et urbe Roma*, and the Roman city.' With an air of hardly restrained zeal—'Shall I go on, sir?'

Mr. King winced. 'No, thank you. You have indeed given us a translation! May I ask if it conveys any meaning whatever to your so-called mind?'

'Oh, I think so, sir.' This with gentle toleration for Horace and all his works.

'We envy you. Sit down.'

Beetle sat down relieved, well knowing that a reef of uncharted genitives stretched ahead of him, on which in spite of M'Turk's sailing-directions he would infallibly have been wrecked.

Rattray, who took up the task, steered neatly through them and came unscathed to port.

'Here we require drama,' said King. 'Regulus himself is speaking now. Who shall represent the provident-minded Regulus? Winton, will you kindly oblige?

Winton of King's House, a long, heavy, tow-headed Second Fifteen forward, overdue for his First Fifteen colours, and in aspect like an earnest, elderly horse, rose up, and announced, among other things, that he had seen 'signs affixed to Punic deluges.' Half the Form shouted for joy, and the other half for joy that there was something to shout about.

Mr. King opened and shut his eyes with great swiftness. '*Signa adfixa delubris*,' he gasped. 'So *delubris* is "deluges" is it? Winton, in all our dealings, have I ever suspected you of a jest?'

'No, sir,' said the rigid and angular Winton, while the Form rocked about him.

'And yet you assert *delubris* means "deluges."

Whether I am a fit subject for such a jape is, of course, a matter of opinion, but . . . Winton, you are normally conscientious. May we assume you looked out *delubris ?*'

'No, sir.' Winton was privileged to speak that truth dangerous to all who stand before Kings.

''Made a shot at it then?'

Every line of Winton's body showed he had done nothing of the sort. Indeed, the very idea that 'Pater' Winton (and a boy is not called 'Pater' by companions for his frivolity) would make a shot at anything was beyond belief. But he replied, 'Yes,' and all the while worked with his right heel as though he were heeling a ball at punt-about.

Though none dared to boast of being a favourite with King, the taciturn, three-cornered Winton stood high in his House-Master's opinion. It seemed to save him neither rebuke nor punishment, but the two were in some fashion sympathetic.

'Hm!' said King drily. 'I was going to say—*Flagitio additis damnum*, but I think—I think I see the process. Beetle, the translation of *delubris*, please.'

Beetle raised his head from his shaking arm long enough to answer: 'Ruins, sir.'

There was an impressive pause while King checked off crimes on his fingers. Then to Beetle the much-enduring man addressed winged words:

'Guessing,' said he. 'Guessing, Beetle, as usual, from the look of *delubris* that it bore some relation to *diluvium* or deluge, you imparted the result of your half-baked lucubrations to Winton who seems to have been lost enough to have accepted it. Observing next, your companion's fall, from the presumed security of your

undistinguished position in the rear-guard, you took another pot-shot. The turbid chaos of your mind threw up some memory of the word "dilapidations" which you have pitifully attempted to disguise under the synonym of "ruins."'

As this was precisely what Beetle had done he looked hurt but forgiving. 'We will attend to this later,' said King. 'Go on, Winton, and retrieve yourself.'

Delubris happened to be the one word which Winton had not looked out and had asked Beetle for, when they were settling into their places. He forged ahead with no further trouble. Only when he rendered *scilicet* as 'forsooth,' King erupted.

'Regulus,' he said, 'was not a leader-writer for the penny press, nor, for that matter, was Horace. Regulus says: "The soldier ransomed by gold will come keener for the fight—will he by—by gum!" *That's* the meaning of *scilicet*. It indicates contempt—bitter contempt. "Forsooth," forsooth! You'll be talking about "speckled beauties" and "eventually transpire" next. Howell, what do you make of that doubled "Vidi ego—ego vidi"? It wasn't put in to fill up the metre, you know.'

'Isn't it intensive, sir?' said Howell, afflicted by a genuine interest in what he read. 'Regulus was a bit in earnest about Rome making no terms with Carthage —and he wanted to let the Romans understand it, didn't he, sir?'

'Less than your usual grace, but the fact. Regulus *was* in earnest. He was also engaged at the same time in cutting his own throat with every word he uttered. He knew Carthage which (your examiners won't ask you this so you needn't take notes) was a sort of God-

forsaken nigger Manchester. Regulus was not thinking about his own life. He was telling Rome the truth. He was playing for his side. Those lines from the eighteenth to the fortieth ought to be written in blood. Yet there are things in human garments which will tell you that Horace was a flaneur—a man about town. Avoid such beings. Horace knew a very great deal. *He* knew! *Erit ille fortis*—"will he be brave who once to faithless foes has knelt?" And again (stop pawing with your hooves, Thornton!) *hic unde vitam sumeret inscius*. That means roughly—but I perceive I am ahead of my translators. Begin at *hic unde*, Vernon, and let us see if you have the spirit of Regulus.'

Now no one expected fireworks from gentle Paddy Vernon, sub-prefect of Hartopp's House, but, as must often be the case with growing boys, his mind was in abeyance for the time being, and he said, all in a rush, on behalf of Regulus: '*O magna Carthago probrosis altior Italiae ruinis*, O Carthage, thou wilt stand forth higher than the ruins of Italy.'

Even Beetle, most lenient of critics, was interested at this point, though he did not join the half-groan of reprobation from the wiser heads of the Form.

'*Please* don't mind me,' said King, and Vernon very kindly did not. He ploughed on thus: 'He (Regulus) is related to have removed from himself the kiss of the shameful wife and of his small children as less by the head, and, being stern, to have placed his virile visage on the ground.'

Since King loved 'virile' about as much as he did 'spouse' or 'forsooth' the Form looked up hopefully. But Jove thundered not.

'Until,' Vernon continued, 'he should have confirmed

the sliding fathers as being the author of counsel never given under an alias.'

He stopped, conscious of stillness round him like the dread calm of the typhoon's centre. King's opening voice was sweeter than honey.

'I am painfully aware by bitter experience that I cannot give you any idea of the passion, the power, the—the essential guts of the lines which you have so foully outraged in our presence. But——' the note changed, 'so far as in me lies, I will strive to bring home to you, Vernon, the fact that there exist in Latin a few pitiful rules of grammar, of syntax, nay, even of declension, which were not created for your incult sport—your Bœotian diversion. You will, therefore, Vernon, write out and bring to me to-morrow a word-for-word English-Latin translation of the Ode, together with a full list of all adjectives—an adjective is not a verb, Vernon, as the Lower Third will tell you—all adjectives, their number, case, and gender. Even now I haven't begun to deal with you faithfully.'

'I—I'm very sorry, sir,' Vernon stammered.

'You mistake the symptoms, Vernon. You are possibly discomfited by the imposition, but sorrow postulates some sort of mind, intellect, *nous*. Your rendering of *probrosis* alone stamps you as lower than the beasts of the field. Will some one take the taste out of our mouths? And—talking of tastes——' He coughed. There was a distinct flavour of chlorine gas in the air. Up went an eyebrow, though King knew perfectly well what it meant.

'Mr. Hartopp's st—science class next door,' said Malpass.

'Oh yes. I had forgotten. Our newly established

Modern Side, of course. Perowne, open the windows; and Winton, go on once more from *interque maerentes*.'

'And hastened away,' said Winton, 'surrounded by his mourning friends, into—into illustrious banishment. But I got that out of Conington, sir,' he added in one conscientious breath.

'I am aware. The master generally knows his ass's crib, though I acquit *you* of any intention that way. Can you suggest anything for *egregius exul?* Only "egregious exile"? I fear "egregious" is a good word ruined. No! You can't in this case improve on Conington. Now then for *atqui sciebat quae sibi barbarus tortor pararet.* The whole force of it lies in the *atqui*.'

'Although he knew,' Winton suggested.

'Stronger than that, I think.'

'He who knew well,' Malpass interpolated.

'Ye-es. "Well though he knew." I don't like Conington's "well-witting." It's Wardour Street.'

'Well though he knew what the savage torturer was —was getting ready for him,' said Winton.

'Ye-es. Had in store for him.'

'Yet he brushed aside his kinsmen and the people delaying his return.'

'Ye-es; but then how do you render *obstantes?*'

'If it's a free translation mightn't *obstantes* and *morantem* come to about the same thing, sir?'

'Nothing comes to "about the same thing" with Horace, Winton. As I have said, Horace was not a journalist. No, I take it that his kinsmen bodily withstood his departure, whereas the crowd—*populumque*—the democracy stood about futilely pitying him and

getting in the way. Now for that noblest of endings—*quam si clientum*,' and King ran off into the quotation:

> 'As though some tedious business o'er
> Of clients' court, his journey lay
> Towards Venafrum's grassy floor
> Or Sparta-built Tarentum's bay.

All right, Winton. Beetle, when you've quite finished dodging the fresh air yonder, give me the meaning of *tendens*—and turn down your collar.'

'Me, sir? *Tendens*, sir? Oh! Stretching away in the direction of, sir.'

'Idiot! Regulus was not a feature of the landscape. He was a man, self-doomed to death by torture. *Atqui sciebat*—knowing it—having achieved it for his country's sake—can't you hear that *atqui* cut like a knife?—he moved off with some dignity. That is why Horace out of the whole golden Latin tongue chose the one word "tendens"—which is utterly untranslatable.'

The gross injustice of being asked to translate it, converted Beetle into a young Christian martyr, till King buried his nose in his handkerchief again.

'I think they've broken another gas-bottle next door, sir,' said Howell. 'They're always doing it.' The Form coughed as more chlorine came in.

'Well, I suppose we must be patient with the Modern Side,' said King. 'But it is almost insupportable for this Side. Vernon, what are you grinning at?'

Vernon's mind had returned to him glowing and inspired. He chuckled as he underlined his Horace.

'It appears to amuse you,' said King. 'Let us participate. What is it?'

'The last two lines of the Tenth Ode, in this book, sir,' was Vernon's amazing reply.

'What? Oh, I see. *Non hoc semper erit liminis aut aquae caelestis patiens latus.*'[1] King's mouth twitched to hide a grin. 'Was that done with intention?'

'I—I thought it fitted, sir.'

'It does. It's distinctly happy. What put it into your thick head, Paddy?'

'I don't know, sir, except we did the Ode last term.'

'And you remembered? The same head that minted *probrosis* as a verb! Vernon, you are an enigma. No! This Side will *not* always be patient of unheavenly gases and waters. I will make representations to our so-called Moderns. Meantime (who shall say I am not just?) I remit you your accrued pains and penalties in regard to *probrosim*, *probrosis*, *probrosit* and other enormities. I oughtn't to do it, but this Side is occasionally human. By no means bad, Paddy.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Vernon, wondering how inspiration had visited him.

Then King, with a few brisk remarks about Science, headed them back to Regulus, of whom and of Horace and Rome and evil-minded commercial Carthage and of the democracy eternally futile, he explained, in all ages and climes, he spoke for ten minutes; passing thence to the next Ode—*Delicta majorum*—where he fetched up, full-voiced, upon—'*Dis te minorem quod geris imperas*' (Thou rulest because thou bearest thyself as lower than the Gods)—making it a text for a discourse on manners, morals, and respect for authority as dis-

[1] 'This side will not always be patient of rain and waiting on the threshold.'

tinct from bottled gases, which lasted till the bell rang. Then Beetle, concertinaing his books, observed to Winton, 'When King's really on tap he's an interestin' dog. Hartopp's chlorine uncorked him.'

'Yes; but why did you tell me *delubris* was "deluges," you silly ass?' said Winton.

'Well, that uncorked him too. Look out, you hoof-handed old owl!' Winton had cleared for action as the Form poured out like puppies at play and was scragging Beetle. Stalky from behind collared Winton low. The three fell in confusion.

'*Dis te minorem quod geris imperas*,' quoth Stalky, ruffling Winton's lint-white locks. ''Mustn't jape with Number Five study. Don't be too virtuous. Don't brood over it. 'Twon't count against you in your future caree-ah. Cheer up, Pater.'

'Pull him off my—er—essential guts, will you?' said Beetle from beneath. 'He's squashin' 'em.'

They dispersed to their studies.

. . . . . .

No one, the owner least of all, can explain what is in a growing boy's mind. It might have been the blind ferment of adolescence; Stalky's random remarks about virtue might have stirred him; like his betters he might have sought popularity by way of clowning; or, as the Head asserted years later, the only known jest of his serious life might have worked on him, as a sober-sided man's one love colours and dislocates all his after days. But, at the next lesson, mechanical drawing with Mr. Lidgett who as drawing-master had very limited powers of punishment, Winton fell suddenly from grace and let loose a live mouse in the form-room. The whole

form, shrieking and leaping high, threw at it all the plaster cones, pyramids, and fruit in high relief—not to mention ink-pots—that they could lay hands on. Mr. Lidgett reported at once to the Head; Winton owned up to his crime, which, venial in the Upper Third, pardonable at a price in the Lower Fourth, was, of course, rank ruffianism on the part of a Fifth Form boy; and so, by graduated stages, he arrived at the Head's study just before lunch, penitent, perturbed, annoyed with himself and—as the Head said to King in the corridor after the meal—more human than he had known him in seven years.

'You see,' the Head drawled on, 'Winton's only fault is a certain costive and unaccommodating virtue. So this comes very happily.'

'I've never noticed any sign of it,' said King. Winton was in King's House, and though King as proconsul might, and did, infernally oppress his own Province, once a black and yellow cap was in trouble at the hands of the Imperial authority King fought for him to the very last steps of Caesar's throne.

'Well, you yourself admitted just now that a mouse was beneath the occasion,' the Head answered.

'It was.' Mr. King did not love Mr. Lidgett. 'It should have been a rat. But—but—I hate to plead it—it's the lad's first offence.'

'Could you have damned him more completely, King?'

'Hm. What is the penalty?' said King, in retreat, but keeping up a rear-guard action.

'Only my usual few lines of Virgil to be shown up by tea-time.'

The Head's eyes turned slightly to that end of the

corridor where Mullins, Captain of the Games ('Pot,' 'old Pot,' or 'Potiphar' Mullins), was pinning up the usual Wednesday notice—'Big Middle, and Little Side Football—A to K, L to Z, 3 to 4.45 P.M.

You cannot write out the Head's usual few (which means five hundred) Latin lines and play football for one hour and three-quarters between the hours of 1.30 and 5 P.M. Winton had evidently no intention of trying to do so, for he hung about the corridor with a set face and an uneasy foot. Yet it was law in the school, compared with which that of the Medes and Persians was no more than a non-committal resolution, that any boy, outside the First Fifteen, who missed his football, for any reason whatever, and had not a written excuse, duly signed by competent authority to explain his absence, would receive not less than three strokes with a ground-ash from the Captain of the Games, generally a youth between seventeen and eighteen years, rarely under eleven stone ('Pot' was nearer thirteen), and always in hard condition.

King knew without inquiry that the Head had given Winton no such excuse.

'But he is practically a member of the First Fifteen. He has played for it all this term,' said King. 'I believe his Cap should have arrived last week.'

'His Cap has not been given him. Officially, therefore, he is naught. I rely on old Pot.'

'But Mullins is Winton's study-mate,' King persisted.

Pot Mullins and Pater Winton were cousins and rather close friends.

'That will make no difference to Mullins—or Winton, if I know 'em,' said the Head.

'But—but,' King played his last card desperately, 'I was going to recommend Winton for extra sub-prefect in my House, now Carton has gone.'

'Certainly,' said the Head. 'Why not? He will be excellent by tea-time, I hope.'

At that moment they saw Mr. Lidgett, tripping down the corridor, waylaid by Winton.

'It's about that mouse-business at mechanical drawing,' Winton opened, swinging across his path.

'Yes, yes, highly disgraceful,' Mr. Lidgett panted.

'I know it was,' said Winton. 'It—it was a cad's trick because——'

'Because you knew I couldn't give you more than fifty lines,' said Mr. Lidgett.

'Well, anyhow I've come to apologise for it.'

'Certainly,' said Mr. Lidgett, and added, for he was a kindly man, 'I think that shows quite right feeling. I'll tell the Head at once I'm satisfied.'

'No—no!' The boy's still unmended voice jumped from the growl to the squeak. 'I didn't mean *that!* I—I did it on principle. Please don't—er—do anything of that kind.'

Mr. Lidgett looked him up and down and, being an artist, understood.

'Thank you, Winton,' he said. 'This shall be between ourselves.'

'You heard?' said King, indecent pride in his voice.

'Of course. You thought he was going to get Lidgett to beg him off the impot.'

King denied this with so much warmth that the Head laughed and King went away in a huff.

'By the way,' said the Head, 'I've told Winton to do his lines in your form-room—not in his study.'

'Thanks,' said King over his shoulder, for the Head's orders had saved Winton and Mullins, who was doing extra Army work in the study, from an embarrassing afternoon together.

An hour later, King wandered into his still form-room as though by accident. Winton was hard at work.

'Aha!' said King, rubbing his hands. 'This does not look like games, Winton. Don't let me arrest your facile pen. Whence this sudden love for Virgil?'

'Impot from the Head, sir, for that mouse-business this morning.'

'Rumours thereof have reached us. That was a lapse on your part into Lower Thirdery which I don't quite understand.'

The 'tump-tump' of the punt-abouts before the sides settled to games came through the open window. Winton, like his House-master, loved fresh air. Then they heard Paddy Vernon, sub-prefect on duty, calling the roll in the field and marking defaulters. Winton wrote steadily. King curled himself up on a desk, hands round knees. One would have said that the man was gloating over the boy's misfortune, but the boy understood.

'*Dis te minorem quod geris imperas*,' King quoted presently. 'It is necessary to bear oneself as lower than the local gods—even than drawing-masters who are precluded from effective retaliation. I *do* wish you'd tried that mouse-game with me, Pater.'

Winton grinned; then sobered. 'It was a cad's trick, sir, to play on Mr. Lidgett.' He peered forward at the page he was copying.

'Well, "the sin *I* impute to each frustrate ghost"——' King stopped himself. 'Why do you goggle like an owl?

Hand me the Mantuan and I'll dictate. No matter. Any rich Virgilian measures will serve. I may peradventure recall a few.' He began:

'Tu regere imperio populos Romane memento
Hae tibi erunt artes pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.

There you have it all, Winton. Write that out twice and yet once again.'

For the next forty minutes, with never a glance at the book, King paid out the glorious hexameters (and King could read Latin as though it were alive), Winton hauling them in and coiling them away behind him as trimmers in a telegraph-ship's hold coil away deep-sea cable. King broke from the Aeneid to the Georgics and back again, pausing now and then to translate some specially loved line or to dwell on the treble-shot texture of the ancient fabric. He did not allude to the coming interview with Mullins except at the last, when he said, 'I think at this juncture, Pater, I need not ask you for the precise significance of *atqui sciebat quae sibi barbarus tortor.*'

The ungrateful Winton flushed angrily, and King loafed out to take five o'clock call-over, after which he invited little Hartopp to tea and a talk on chlorine-gas. Hartopp accepted the challenge like a bantam, and the two went up to King's study about the same time as Winton returned to the form-room beneath it to finish his lines.

Then half a dozen of the Second Fifteen who should have been washing strolled in to condole with 'Pater' Winton, whose misfortune and its consequences were

common talk. No one was more sincere than the long, red-headed, knotty-knuckled 'Paddy' Vernon, but, being a careless animal, he joggled Winton's desk.

'Curse you for a silly ass!' said Winton. 'Don't do that.'

No one is expected to be polite while under punishment, so Vernon, sinking his sub-prefectship, replied peacefully enough:

'Well, don't be wrathy, Pater.'

'I'm not,' said Winton. 'Get out! This ain't your House form-room.'

''Form-room don't belong to you. Why don't you go to your own study?' Vernon replied.

'Because Mullins is there waitin' for the victim,' said Stalky delicately, and they all laughed. 'You ought to have shaken that mouse out of your trouser-leg, Pater. That's the way *I* did in my youth. Pater's revertin' to his second childhood. Never mind, Pater, we all respect you and your future caree-ah.'

Winton, still writhing, growled. Vernon leaning on the desk somehow shook it again. Then he laughed.

'What are you grinning at?' Winton asked.

'I was only thinkin' of *you* being sent up to take a lickin' from Pot. I swear I don't think it's fair. You've never shirked a game in your life, and you're as good as in the First Fifteen already. Your Cap ought to have been delivered last week, oughtn't it?'

It was law in the school that no man could by any means enjoy the privileges and immunities of the First Fifteen till the black velvet cap with the gold tassel, made by dilatory Exeter outfitters, had been actually set on his head. Ages ago, a large-built and unruly Second Fifteen had attempted to change this law, but

the prefects of that age were still larger, and the lively experiment had never been repeated.

'Will you,' said Winton very slowly, 'kindly mind your own damned business, you cursed, clumsy, fat-headed fool?'

The form-room was as silent as the empty field in the darkness outside. Vernon shifted his feet uneasily.

'Well, *I* shouldn't like to take a lickin' from Pot,' he said.

'Wouldn't you?' Winton asked, as he paged the sheets of lines with hands that shook.

'No, I shouldn't,' said Vernon, his freckles growing more distinct on the bridge of his white nose.

'Well, I'm going to take it'—Winton moved clear of the desk as he spoke. 'But *you*'re going to take a lickin' from me first.' Before any one realised it, he had flung himself neighing against Vernon. No decencies were observed on either side, and the rest looked on amazed. The two met confusedly, Vernon trying to do what he could with his longer reach; Winton, insensible to blows, only concerned to drive his enemy into a corner and batter him to pulp. This he managed over against the fireplace, where Vernon dropped half-stunned. 'Now I'm going to give you your lickin',' said Winton. 'Lie there till I get a ground-ash and I'll cut you to pieces. If you move, I'll chuck you out of the window.' He wound his hands into the boy's collar and waistband, and had actually heaved him half off the ground before the others with one accord dropped on his head, shoulders, and legs. He fought them crazily in an awful hissing silence. Stalky's sensitive nose was rubbed along the floor; Beetle received a jolt in the wind that sent him whistling and crowing against the wall;

Perowne's forehead was cut, and Malpass came out with an eye that explained itself like a dying rainbow through a whole week.

'Mad! Quite mad!' said Stalky, and for the third time wriggled back to Winton's throat. The door opened and King came in, Hartopp's little figure just behind him. The mound on the floor panted and heaved but did not rise, for Winton still squirmed vengefully. 'Only a little play, sir,' said Perowne. ''Only hit my head against a form.' This was quite true.

'Oh,' said King. '*Dimovit obstantes propinquos*. You, I presume, are the *populus* delaying Winton's return to—Mullins, eh?'

'No, sir,' said Stalky behind his claret-coloured handkerchief. 'We're the *maerentes amicos*.'

'Not bad! You see, some of it sticks after all,' King chuckled to Hartopp, and the two masters left without further inquiries.

The boys sat still on the now passive Winton.

'Well,' said Stalky at last, 'of all the putrid he-asses, Pater, you are *the*——'

'I'm sorry. I'm awfully sorry,' Winton began, and they let him rise. He held out his hand to the bruised and bewildered Vernon. 'Sorry, Paddy. I—I must have lost my temper. I—I don't know what's the matter with me.'

''Fat lot of good that'll do my face at tea,' Vernon grunted. 'Why couldn't you say there was something wrong with you instead of lamming out like a lunatic? Is my lip puffy?'

'Just a trifle. Look at my beak! Well, we got all these pretty marks at footer—owin' to the zeal with which we played the game,' said Stalky, dusting him-

self. 'But d'you think you're fit to be let loose again, Pater? 'Sure you don't want to kill another sub-prefect? I wish *I* was Pot. I'd cut your sprightly young soul out.'

'I s'pose I ought to go to Pot now,' said Winton.

'And let all the other asses see you lookin' like this! Not much. We'll all come up to Number Five Study and wash off in hot water. Beetle, you aren't damaged. Go along and light the gas-stove.'

'There's a tin of cocoa in my study somewhere,' Perowne shouted after him. 'Rootle round till you find it, and take it up.'

Separately, by different roads, Vernon's jersey pulled half over his head, the boys repaired to Number Five Study. Little Hartopp and King, I am sorry to say, leaned over the banisters of King's landing and watched.

'Ve-ry human,' said little Hartopp. 'Your virtuous Winton, having got himself into trouble, takes it out of my poor old Paddy. I wonder what precise lie Paddy will tell about his face.'

'But surely you aren't going to embarrass him by asking?' said King.

'*Your* boy won,' said Hartopp.

'To go back to what we were discussing,' said King quickly, 'do you pretend that your modern system of inculcating unrelated facts about chlorine, for instance, all of which may be proved fallacies by the time the boys grow up, can have any real bearing on education—even the low type of it that examiners expect?'

'I maintain nothing. But is it any worse than your Chinese reiteration of uncomprehended syllables in a dead tongue?'

'Dead, forsooth!' King fairly danced. 'The only

living tongue on earth! Chinese! On my word, Hartopp!'

'And at the end of seven years—how often have I said it?' Hartopp went on,—'seven years of two hundred and twenty days of six hours each, your victims go away with nothing, absolutely nothing, except, perhaps, if they've been very attentive, a dozen—no, I'll grant you twenty—one score of totally unrelated Latin tags which any child of twelve could have absorbed in two terms.'

'But—but can't you realise that if our system brings later—at any rate—at a pinch—a simple understanding—grammar and Latinity apart—a mere glimpse of the significance (foul word!) of, we'll say, one Ode of Horace, one twenty lines of Virgil, we've got what we poor devils of ushers are striving after?'

'And what might that be?' said Hartopp.

'Balance, proportion, perspective—life. Your scientific man is the unrelated animal—the beast without background. Haven't you ever realised *that* in your atmosphere of stinks?'

'Meantime you make them lose life for the sake of living, eh?'

'Blind again, Hartopp! I told you about Paddy's quotation this morning. (But he made *probrosis* a verb, he did!) You yourself heard young Corkran's reference to *maerentes amicos*. It sticks—a little of it sticks among the barbarians.'

'Absolutely and essentially Chinese,' said little Hartopp, who, alone of the common-room, refused to be outfaced by King. 'But I don't yet understand how Paddy came to be licked by Winton. Paddy's supposed to be something of a boxer.'

'Beware of vinegar made from honey,' King replied. 'Pater, like some other people, is patient and long-suffering, but he has his limits. The Head is oppressing him damnably, too. As I pointed out, the boy has practically been in the First Fifteen since term began.'

'But, my dear fellow, I've known you give a boy an impot and refuse him leave off games, again and again.'

'Ah, but that was when there was real need to get at some oaf who couldn't be sensitised in any other way. Now, in our esteemed Head's action I see nothing but——'

The conversation from this point does not concern us.

Meantime Winton, very penitent and especially polite towards Vernon, was being cheered with cocoa in Number Five Study. They had some difficulty in stemming the flood of his apologies. He himself pointed out to Vernon that he had attacked a sub-prefect for no reason whatever, and, therefore, deserved official punishment.

'I can't think what was the matter with me to-day,' he mourned. 'Ever since that blasted mouse business——'

'Well, then, don't think,' said Stalky. 'Or do you want Paddy to make a row about it before all the school?'

Here Vernon was understood to say that he would see Winton and all the school somewhere else.

'And if you imagine Perowne and Malpass and me are goin' to give evidence at a prefects' meeting just to soothe your beastly conscience, you jolly well err,' said Beetle. 'I know what you did.'

'What?' croaked Pater, out of the valley of his humiliation.

'You went Berserk. I've read all about it in *Hypatia*.'

'What's "going Berserk"?' Winton asked.

'Never you mind,' was the reply. 'Now, don't you feel awfully weak and seedy?'

'I *am* rather tired,' said Winton, sighing.

'That's what you ought to be. You've gone Berserk and pretty soon you'll go to sleep. But you'll probably be liable to fits of it all your life,' Beetle concluded. ''Shouldn't wonder if you murdered some one some day.'

'Shut up—you and your Berserks!' said Stalky. 'Go to Mullins now and get it over, Pater.'

'I call it filthy unjust of the Head,' said Vernon. 'Anyhow, you've given me my lickin', old man. I hope Pot'll give you yours.'

'I'm awfully sorry—awfully sorry,' was Winton's last word.

It was the custom in that consulship to deal with games' defaulters between five o'clock call-over and tea. Mullins, who was old enough to pity, did not believe in letting boys wait through the night till the chill of the next morning for their punishments. He was finishing off the last of the small fry and their excuses when Winton arrived.

'But, please, Mullins'—this was Babcock tertius, a dear little twelve-year-old mother's darling—'I had an awful hack on the knee. I've been to the Matron about it and she gave me some iodine. I've been rubbing it in all day. I thought that would be an excuse off.'

'Let's have a look at it,' said the impassive Mullins. 'That's a shin-bruise—about a week old. Touch your toes. I'll give you the iodine.'

Babcock yelled loudly as he had many times before. The face of Jevons, aged eleven, a new boy that dark

wet term, low in the House, low in the Lower School, and lowest of all in his homesick little mind, turned white at the horror of the sight. They could hear his working lips part stickily as Babcock wailed his way out of hearing.

'Hullo, Jevons! What brings you here?' said Mullins.

'Pl-ease, sir, I went for a walk with Babcock tertius.'

'Did you? Then I bet you went to the tuck-shop—and you paid, didn't you?'

A nod. Jevons was too terrified to speak.

'Of course, and I bet Babcock told you that old Pot 'ud let you off because it was the first time.'

Another nod with a ghost of a smile in it.

'All right.' Mullins picked Jevons up before he could guess what was coming, laid him on the table with one hand, with the other gave him three emphatic spanks, then held him high in air.

'Now you tell Babcock tertius that he's got you a licking from me, and see you jolly well pay it back to him. And when you're prefect of games don't you let any one shirk his footer without a written excuse. Where d'you play in your game?'

'Forward, sir.'

'You can do better than that. I've seen you run like a young buck-rabbit. Ask Dickson from me to try you as three-quarter next game, will you? Cut along.'

Jevons left, warm for the first time that day, enormously set up in his own esteem, and very hot against the deceitful Babcock.

Mullins turned to Winton. 'Your name's on the list, Pater.' Winton nodded.

'I know it. The Head landed me with an impot for

that mouse-business at mechanical drawing. No excuse.'

'He meant it then?' Mullins jerked his head delicately towards the ground-ash on the table. 'I heard something about it.'

Winton nodded. 'A rotten thing to do,' he said. 'Can't think what I was doing ever to do it. It counts against a fellow so; and there's some more too——'

'All right, Pater. Just stand clear of our photo-bracket, will you?'

The little formality over, there was a pause. Winton swung round, yawned in Pot's astonished face and staggered towards the window-seat.

'What's the matter with you, Dick? Ill?'

'No. Perfectly all right, thanks. Only—only a little sleepy.' Winton stretched himself out, and then and there fell deeply and placidly asleep.

'It isn't a faint,' said the experienced Mullins, 'or his pulse wouldn't act. 'Tisn't a fit or he'd snort and twitch. It can't be sunstroke, this term, and he hasn't been over-training for anything.' He opened Winton's collar, packed a cushion under his head, threw a rug over him and sat down to listen to the regular breathing. Before long Stalky arrived, on pretence of borrowing a book. He looked at the window-seat.

''Noticed anything wrong with Winton lately?' said Mullins.

''Notice anything wrong with my beak?' Stalky replied. 'Pater went Berserk after call-over, and fell on a lot of us for jesting with him about his impot. You ought to see Malpass's eye.'

'You mean that Pater fought?' said Mullins.

'Like a devil. Then he nearly went to sleep in our

study just now. I expect he'll be all right when he wakes up. Rummy business! Conscientious old bargee. You ought to have heard his apologies.'

'But Pater can't fight one little bit,' Mullins repeated.

''Twasn't fighting. He just tried to murder every one.' Stalky described the affair, and when he left Mullins went off to take counsel with the Head, who, out of a cloud of blue smoke, told him that all would yet be well.

'Winton,' said he, 'is a little stiff in his moral joints. He'll get over that. If he asks you whether to-day's doings will count against him in his——'

'But you know it's important to him, sir. His people aren't—very well off,' said Mullins.

'That's why I'm taking all this trouble. You must reassure him, Pot. I have overcrowded him with new experiences. Oh, by the way, has his Cap come?'

'It came at dinner, sir.' Mullins laughed.

Sure enough, when he waked at tea-time, Winton proposed to take Mullins all through every one of his day's lapses from grace, and 'Do you think it will count against me?' said he.

'Don't you fuss so much about yourself and your silly career,' said Mullins. 'You're all right. And oh—here's your First Cap at last. Shove it up on the bracket and come on to tea.'

They met King on their way, stepping statelily and rubbing his hands. 'I have applied,' said he, 'for the services of an additional sub-prefect in Carton's unlamented absence. Your name, Winton, seems to have found favour with the powers that be, and—and all things considered—I am disposed to give my support to the nomination. You are therefore a quasi-lictor.'

'Then it didn't count against me,' Winton gasped as soon as they were out of hearing.

A Captain of Games can jest with a sub-prefect publicly.

'You utter ass!' said Mullins, and caught him by the back of his stiff neck and ran him down to the hall where the sub-prefects, who sit below the salt, made him welcome with the economical bloater-paste of mid-term.

. . . . . .

King and little Hartopp were sparring in the Reverend John Gillett's study at 10 P.M.—classical *versus* modern as usual.

'Character—proportion—background,' snarled King. 'That is the essence of the Humanities.'

'Analects of Confucius,' little Hartopp answered.

'Time,' said the Reverend John behind the soda-water. 'You men oppress me. Hartopp, what did you say to Paddy in your dormitories to-night? Even *you* couldn't have overlooked his face.'

'But I did,' said Hartopp calmly. 'I wasn't even humorous about it, as some clerics might have been. I went straight through and said naught.'

'Poor Paddy! Now, for my part,' said King, 'and you know I am not lavish in my praises, I consider Winton a first-class type; absolutely first-class.'

'Ha-ardly,' said the Reverend John. 'First-class of the second class, I admit. The very best type of second class but'—he shook his head—'it should have been a rat. Pater'll never be anything more than a Colonel of Engineers.'

'What do you base that verdict on?' said King stiffly.

'He came to me after prayers—with all his conscience.'

'Poor old Pater. Was it the mouse?' said little Hartopp.

'That, and what he called his uncontrollable temper, and his responsibilities as sub-prefect.'

'And you?'

'If we had had what is vulgarly called a pi-jaw he'd have had hysterics. So I recommended a dose of Epsom salts. He'll take it, too—conscientiously. Don't eat me, King. Perhaps he'll be a K.C.B.'

Ten o'clock struck and the Army class boys in the further studies coming to their houses after an hour's extra work passed along the gravel path below. Some one was chanting, to the tune of 'White sand and grey sand,' *Dis te minorem quod geris imperas.* He stopped outside Mullins' study. They heard Mullins' window slide up and then Stalky's voice:

'Ah! Good-evening, Mullins, my *barbarus tortor.* We're the waits. We have come to inquire after the local Berserk. Is he doin' as well as can be expected in his new caree-ah?'

'Better than you will, in a sec, Stalky,' Mullins grunted.

' 'Glad of that. We thought he'd like to know that Paddy has been carried to the sick-house in ravin' delirium. They think it's concussion of the brain.'

'Why, he was all right at prayers,' Winton began earnestly, and they heard a laugh in the background as Mullins slammed down the window.

' 'Night, Regulus,' Stalky sang out, and the light footsteps went on.

'You see. It sticks. A little of it sticks among the barbarians,' said King.

'Amen,' said the Reverend John. 'Go to bed.'

A TRANSLATION

Horace, Bk. V. *Ode* 3

There are whose study is of smells,
And to attentive schools rehearse
How something mixed with something else
Makes something worse.

Some cultivate in broths impure
The clients of our body—these,
Increasing without Venus, cure,
Or cause, disease.

Others the heated wheel extol,
And all its offspring, whose concern
Is how to make it farthest roll
And fastest turn.

Me, much incurious if the hour
Present, or to be paid for, brings
Me to Brundusium by the power
Of wheels or wings;

Me, in whose breast no flame hath burned
Life-long, save that by Pindar lit,
Such lore leaves cold: I am not turned
Aside to it

A TRANSLATION

More than when, sunk in thought profound
Of what the unaltering Gods require,
My steward (friend but slave) brings round
Logs for my fire.

THE EDGE OF THE EVENING

(1913)

Ah! What avails the classic bent,
  And what the chosen word,
Against the undoctored incident
  That actually occurred?

And what is Art whereto we press
  Through paint and prose and rhyme—
When Nature in her nakedness
  Defeats us every time?

'HI! Hi! Hold your horses! Stop! . . . Well! Well!' A lean man in a sable-lined overcoat leaped from a private car and barred my way up Pall Mall. 'You don't know me? You're excusable. I wasn't wearing much of anything last time we met—in South Africa.'

The scales fell from my eyes, and I saw him once more in a sky-blue army shirt, behind barbed wire, among Dutch prisoners bathing at Simonstown, more than a dozen years ago.[1] 'Why, it's Zigler—Laughton O. Zigler!' I cried. 'Well, I *am* glad to see you.'

[1] 'The Captive': *Traffics and Discoveries.*

'Oh no! You don't work any of your English on me. "So glad to see you, doncher know—an' ta-ta!" Do you reside in this village?'

'No. I'm up here buying stores.'

'Then you take my automobile Where to? . . . Oh, I know *them!* My Lord Marshalton is one of the Directors. Pigott, drive to the Army and Navy Co-operative Supply Association Limited, Victoria Street, Westminister.'

He settled himself on the deep dove-colour pneumatic cushions, and his smile was like the turning on of all the electrics. His teeth were whiter than the ivory fittings. He smelt of rare soap and cigarettes—such cigarettes as he handed me from a golden box with an automatic lighter. On my side of the car was a gold-mounted mirror, card and toilette case. I looked at him inquiringly.

'Yes,' he nodded, 'two years after I quit the Cape. She's not an Ohio girl, though. She's in the country now. Is that right? She's at our little place in the country. We'll go there as soon as you're through with your grocery-list. Engagements? The only engagement you've got is to grab your grip—get your bag from your hotel, I mean—and come right along and meet her. You are the captive of *my* bow and spear now.'

'I surrender,' I said meekly. 'Did the Zigler automatic gun do all this?' I pointed to the car fittings.

'Psha! Think of your rememberin' that! Well, no. The Zigler is a great gun—the greatest ever—but life's too short, an' too interestin', to squander on pushing her in military society. I've leased my rights in her to a Pennsylvanian-Transylvanian citizen full of mentality and moral uplift. If those things weigh with the

Chancelleries of Europe, he will make good and—I shall be surprised. Excuse me!'

He bared his head as we passed the statue of the Great Queen outside Buckingham Palace.

'A very great lady!' said he. 'I have enjoyed her hospitality. She represents one of the most wonderful institutions in the world. The next is the one we are going to. Mrs. Zigler uses 'em, and they break her up every week on returned empties.'

'Oh, you mean the Stores?' I said.

'Mrs. Zigler means it more. They are quite ambassadorial in their outlook. I guess I'll wait outside and pray while you wrestle with 'em.'

My business at the Stores finished, and my bag retrieved from the hotel, his moving palace slid us into the country.

'I owe it to you,' Zigler began as smoothly as the car, 'to tell you what I am now. I represent the business end of the American Invasion. Not the blame cars themselves—I wouldn't be found dead in one—but the tools that make 'em. I am the Zigler Higher-Speed Tool and Lathe Trust. The Trust, sir, is entirely my own—in my own inventions. I am the Renzalaer ten-cylinder aerial—the lightest aeroplane-engine on the market—one price, one power, one guarantee. I am the Orlebar Paper-welt, Pulp-panel Company for aeroplane bodies; and I am the Rush Silencer for military aeroplanes—absolutely silent—which the Continent leases under royalty. With three exceptions, the British aren't wise to it yet. That's all I represent at present. You saw me take off my hat to your late Queen? I owe every cent I have to that great an' good Lady. Yes, sir, I came out of Africa, after my eighteen

months' rest-cure and open-air treatment and sea-bathing, as her prisoner of war, like a giant refreshed. There wasn't anything could hold me, when I'd got my hooks into it, after that experience. And to you as a representative British citizen, I say here and now that I regard you as the founder of the family fortune—Tommy's and mine.'

'But I only gave you some papers and tobacco.'

'What more does any citizen need? The Cullinan diamond wouldn't have helped me as much then; an'—talking about South Africa, tell me——'

We talked about South Africa till the car stopped at the Georgian lodge of a great park.

'We'll get out here. I want to show you a rather sightly view,' said Zigler.

We walked, perhaps, half a mile, across timber-dotted turf, past a lake, entered a dark rhododendron-planted wood, ticking with the noise of pheasants' feet, and came out suddenly, where five rides met, at a small classic temple between lichened stucco statues which faced a circle of turf, several acres in extent. Irish yews, of a size that I had never seen before, walled the sunless circle like cliffs of riven obsidian, except at the lower end, where it gave on to a stretch of undulating bare ground ending in a timbered slope half-a-mile away.

'That's where the old Marshalton race-course used to be,' said Zigler. 'That ice-house is called Flora's Temple. Nell Gwynne and Mrs. Siddons an' Taglioni an' all that crowd used to act plays here for King George the Third. Wasn't it? Well, George is the only king I play. Let it go at that. This circle was the stage, I guess. The kings an' the nobility sat in Flora's Temple. I forget who sculped these statues at the door. They're

the Comic and Tragic Muse. But it's a sightly view, ain't it?'

The sunlight was leaving the park. I caught a glint of silver to the southward beyond the wooded ridge.

'That's the ocean—the Channel, I mean,' said Zigler. 'It's twenty-three miles as a man flies. A sightly view, ain't it?'

I looked at the severe yews, the dumb yelling mouths of the two statues, at the blue-green shadows on the unsunned grass, and at the still bright plain in front where some deer were feeding.

'It's a most dramatic contrast, but I think it would be better on a summer's day,' I said, and we went on, up one of the noiseless rides, a quarter of a mile at least, till we came to the porticoed front of an enormous Georgian pile. Four footmen revealed themselves in a hall hung with pictures.

'I hired this off of my Lord Marshalton,' Zigler explained, while they helped us out of our coats under the severe eyes of ruffed and periwigged ancestors. 'Ya-as. They always look at *me* too, as if I'd blown in from the gutter. Which, of course, I have. That's Mary, Lady Marshalton. Old man Joshua painted her. Do you see any likeness to my Lord Marshalton? Why, haven't you ever met up with him? He was Captain Mankeltow—my Royal British Artillery captain that blew up my gun in the war, an' then tried to bury me against my religious principles.[1] Ya-as. His father died and he got the lordship. That was about all he got by the time that your British death-duties were through with him. So he said I'd oblige him by hiring

[1] 'The Captive': *Traffics and Discoveries.*

his ranch. It's a hell an' a half of a proposition to handle, but Tommy—Mrs. Laughton—understands it. Come right in to the parlour and be very welcome.'

He guided me, hand on shoulder, into a babble of high-pitched talk and laughter that filled a vast drawing-room. He introduced me as the founder of the family fortunes to a little, lithe, dark-eyed woman whose speech and greeting were of the soft-lipped South. She in turn presented me to her mother, a black-browed, snowy-haired old lady with a cap of priceless Venetian point, hands that must have held many hearts in their time, and a dignity as unquestioned and unquestioning as an empress. She was, indeed, a Burton of Savannah, who, on their own ground, out-rank the Lees of Virginia. The rest of the company came from Buffalo, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Chicago, with here and there a softening southern strain. A party of young folk popped corn beneath a mantelpiece surmounted by a Gainsborough. Two portly men, half hidden by a cased harp, discussed, over sheaves of typewritten documents, the terms of some contract. A knot of matrons talked servants—Irish *versus* German—across the grand piano. A youth ravaged an old bookcase, while beside him a tall girl stared at the portrait of a woman of many loves, dead three hundred years, but now leaping to life and warning under the shaded frame-light. In a corner half-a-dozen girls examined the glazed tables that held the decorations—English and foreign—of the late Lord Marshalton.

'See heah! Would this be the Ordeh of the Gyartah?' one said, pointing.

'I presoom likely. No! The Garter has "*Honey swore*"—I know that much. This is "Tria juncta" something.'

'Oh, what's that cunning little copper cross with "For Valurr"?' a third cried.

'Say! Look at here!' said the young man at the bookcase. 'Here's a first edition of *Handley Cross* and a Beewick's *Birds* right next to it—just like so many best sellers. Look, Maidie!'

The girl beneath the picture half turned her body but not her eyes.

'You don't tell *me!*' she said slowly. 'Their women amounted to something after all.'

'But Woman's scope and outlook was vurry limmutted in those days,' one of the matrons put in, from the piano.

'Limmutted? For *her*? If they whurr, I guess she was the limmut. Who was she? Peters, whurr's the cat'log?'

A thin butler, in charge of two footmen removing the tea-batteries, slid to a table and handed her a blue-and-gilt book. He was buttonholed by one of the men behind the harp, who wished to get a telephone call through to Edinburgh.

'The local office shuts at six,' said Peters. 'But I can get through to'—he named some town—'in ten minutes, sir.'

'That suits me. You'll find me here when you've hitched up. Oh, say, Peters! We—Mister Olpherts an' me—ain't goin' by that early morning train tomorrow—but the other one—on the other line—whatever they call it.'

'The nine twenty-seven, sir. Yes, sir. Early breakfast will be at half-past eight and the car will be at the door at nine.'

'Peters!' an imperious young voice called. 'What's

the matteh with Lord Marshalton's Ordeh of the Gyartah? We cyan't find it anywheah.'

'Well, miss, I *have* heard that that Order is usually returned to His Majesty on the death of the holder. Yes, miss.' Then in a whisper to a footman, 'More butter for the pop-corn in King Charles's Corner.' He stopped behind my chair. 'Your room is Number Eleven, sir. May I trouble you for your keys?'

He left the room with a six-year-old maiden called Alice who had announced she would not go to bed ''less Peter, Peter, Punkin-eater takes me—so there!'

He very kindly looked in on me for a moment as I was dressing for dinner. 'Not at all, sir,' he replied to some compliment I paid him. 'I valeted the late Lord Marshalton for fifteen years. He was very abrupt in his movements, sir. As a rule I never received more than an hour's notice of a journey. We used to go to Syria frequently. I have been twice to Babylon. Mr. and Mrs. Zigler's requirements are, comparatively speaking, few.'

'But the guests?'

'Very little out of the ordinary as soon as one knows their ordinaries. Extremely simple, if I may say so, sir.'

I had the privilege of taking Mrs. Burton in to dinner, and was rewarded with an entirely new, and to me rather shocking, view of Abraham Lincoln, who, she said, had wasted the heritage of his land by blood and fire, and had surrendered the remnant to aliens. 'My brother, suh,' she said, 'fell at Gettysburg in order that Armenians should colonise New England to-day. If I took any interest in any dam-Yankee outside of my son-in-law Laughton yondah, I should say that my brother's death had been amply avenged.'

The man at her right took up the challenge, and the war spread. Her eyes twinkled over the flames she had lit.

'Don't these folk,' she said a little later, 'remind you of Arabs picnicking under the Pyramids?'

'I've never seen the Pyramids,' I replied.

'Hm! I didn't know you were as English as all that.' And when I laughed, 'Are you?'

'Always. It saves trouble.'

'Now that's just what I find so significant among the English'—this was Alice's mother, I think, with one elbow well forward among the salted almonds. 'Oh, I know how *you* feel, Madam Burton, but a Northerner like myself—I'm Buffalo—even though we come over every year—notices the desire for comfort in England. There's so little conflict or uplift in British society.'

'But we like being comfortable,' I said.

'I know it. It's very characteristic. But ain't it a little, just a little, lacking in adaptability an' imagination?'

'They haven't any need for adaptability,' Madam Burton struck in. 'They haven't any Ellis Island standards to live up to.'

'But we can assimilate,' the Buffalo woman charged on.

'Now you *have* done it!' I whispered to the old lady as the blessed word 'assimilation' woke up all the old arguments for and against.

There was not a dull moment in that dinner for me—nor afterwards when the boys and girls at the piano played the rag-time tunes of their own land, while their elders, inexhaustibly interested, replunged into the discussion of that land's future, till there was talk of

coon-can. When all the company had been set to tables Zigler led me into his book-lined study, where I noticed he kept his golf-clubs, and spoke simply as a child, gravely as a bishop, of the years that were past since our last meeting. . . .

'That's about all, I guess—up to date,' he said when he had unrolled the bright map of his fortunes across three continents. 'Bein' rich suits me. So does your country, sir. My own country? You heard what that Detroit man said at dinner. "A Government of the alien, by the alien, for the alien." Mother's right, too. Lincoln killed us. From the highest motives—but he killed us. Oh, say, that reminds me. 'J'ever kill a man from the highest motives?'

'Not from any motive—as far as I remember.'

'Well, I have. It don't weigh on my mind any, but it was interesting. Life *is* interesting for a rich—for any—man in England. Ya-as! Life in England is like settin' in the front row at the theatre and never knowin' when the whole blame drama won't spill itself into your lap. I didn't always know that. I lie abed now, and I blush to think of some of the breaks I made in South Africa. About the British. Not your official method of doin' business. But the Spirit. I was 'way, 'way off on the Spirit. Are you acquainted with any other country where you'd have to kill a man or two to get at the National Spirit?'

'Well,' I answered, 'next to marrying one of its women, killing one of its men makes for pretty close intimacy with any country. I take it you killed a British citizen.'

'Why, no. Our syndicate confined its operations to aliens—dam-fool aliens. . . . 'J'ever know an Eng-

lish lord called Lundie?[1] Looks like a frame-food and soap advertisement. I imagine he was in your Supreme Court before he came into his lordship.'

'He is a lawyer—what we call a Law Lord—a Judge of Appeal—not a real hereditary lord.'

'That's as much beyond me as *this!*' Zigler slapped a fat Debrett on the table. 'But I presoom this unreal Law Lord Lundie is kind o' real in his decisions? I judged so. And—one more question. 'Ever meet a man called Walen?'

'D'you mean Burton-Walen, the editor of ——,' I mentioned the journal.

'That's him. 'Looks like a tough, talks like a Maxim, and trains with kings.'

'He does,' I said. 'Burton-Walen knows all the crowned heads of Europe intimately. It's his hobby.'

'Well, there's the whole outfit for you—exceptin' my Lord Marshalton, *nè* Mankeltow, an' me. All active murderers—specially the Law Lord—or accessories after the fact. And what do they hand you out for *that*, in this country?'

'Twenty years, I believe,' was my reply.

He reflected a moment.

'No-o-o,' he said, and followed it with a smoke-ring. 'Twenty months at the Cape is my limit. Say, murder ain't the soul-shatterin' event those nature-fakers in the magazines make out. It develops naturally like any other proposition. . . . Say, 'j'ever play this golf game? It's come up in the States from Maine to California, an' we're prodoocin' all the champions in sight. Not a business man's play, but interestin'. I've

[1] 'The Puzzler': *Actions and Reactions.*

got a golf-links in the park here that they tell me is the finest inland course ever. I had to pay extra for that when I hired the ranche—last year. It was just before I signed the papers that our murder eventuated. My Lord Marshalton he asked me down for the week-end to fix up something or other—about Peters and the linen, I think 'twas. Mrs. Zigler took a holt of the proposition. She understood Peters from the word "go." There wasn't any house-party; only fifteen or twenty folk. A full house is thirty-two, Tommy tells me. 'Guess we must be near on that to-night. In the smoking-room here, my Lord Marshalton—Mankeltow that was—introduces me to this Walen man with the nose. He'd been in the War too, from start to finish. He knew all the columns and generals that I'd battled with in the days of my Zigler gun. We kinder fell into each other's arms an' let the harsh world go by for a while.

'Walen he introduces me to your Lord Lundie. *He* was a new proposition to me. If he hadn't been a lawyer he'd have made a lovely cattle-king. I thought I had played poker some. Another of my breaks. Ya-as! It cost me eleven hundred dollars besides what Tommy said when I retired. I have no fault to find with your hereditary aristocracy, or your judiciary, or your press.

'Sunday we all went to Church across the Park here. . . . Psha! Think o' your rememberin' my religion! I've become an Episcopalian since I married. Ya-as. . . . After lunch Walen did his crowned-heads-of-Europe stunt in the smokin'-room here. He was long on Kings. And Continental crises. I do not pretend to follow British domestic politics, but in the aeroplane

business a man has to know something of international possibilities. At present, you British are settin' in kimonoes on dynamite kegs. Walen's talk put me wise on the location and size of some of the kegs. Ya-as!

'After that, we four went out to look at those golf-links I was hirin'. We each took a club. Mine'—he glanced at a great tan bag by the fireplace—'was the beginner's friend—the cleek. Well, sir, this golf proposition took a holt of me as quick as—quick as death. They had to prise me off the greens when it got too dark to see, and then we went back to the house. I was walkin' ahead with my Lord Marshalton talkin' beginners' golf. (*I* was the man who ought to have been killed by rights.) We cut 'cross lots through the woods to Flora's Temple—that place I showed you this afternoon. Lundie and Walen were, maybe, twenty or thirty rod behind us in the dark. Marshalton and I stopped at the theatre to admire at the ancestral yew-trees. He took me right under the biggest—King Somebody's Yew—and while I was spannin' it with my handkerchief he says, "Look heah!" just as if it was a rabbit—and down comes a bi-plane into the theatre with no more noise than the dead. My Rush Silencer is the only one on the market that allows that sort of gumshoe work. . . . What? A bi-plane—with two men in it. Both men jump out and start fussin' with the engines. I was starting to tell Mankeltow—I can't remember to call him Marshalton any more—that it looked as if the Royal British Flying Corps had got on to my Rush Silencer at last; but he steps out from under the yew to these two Stealthy Steves and says, "What's the trouble? Can I be of any service?" He thought—so did I—'twas some of the boys from Aldershot or Salis-

bury. Well, sir, from there on, the situation developed like a motion-picture in Hell. The man on the nigh side of the machine whirls round, pulls his gun and fires into Mankeltow's face. I laid him out with my cleek automatically. Any one who shoots a friend of mine gets what's comin' to him if I'm within reach. He drops. Mankeltow rubs his neck with his handkerchief. The man the far side of the machine starts to run. Lundie down the ride, or it might have been Walen, shouts, "What's happened?" Mankeltow says, "Collar that chap."

'The second man runs ring-a-ring-o'-roses round the machine, one hand reachin' behind him. Mankeltow heads him off to me. He breaks blind for Walen and Lundie, who are runnin' up the ride. There's some sort of mix-up among 'em, which it's too dark to see, and a thud. Walen says, "Oh, well collared!" Lundie says, "That's the only thing I never learned at Harrow!" . . . Mankeltow runs up to 'em, still rubbin' his neck, and says, "*He* didn't fire at me. It was the other chap. Where is he?"

'"I've stretched him alongside his machine," I says.

'"Are they poachers?" says Lundie.

'"No. Airmen. I can't make it out," says Mankeltow.

'"Look at here," says Walen, kind of brusque. "This man ain't breathin' at all. Didn't you hear somethin' crack when he lit, Lundie?"

'"My God!" says Lundie. "Did I? I thought it was my suspenders"—no, he said "braces."

'Right there I left them and sort o' tip-toed back to my man, hopin' he'd revived and quit. But he hadn't. That darned cleek had hit him on the back of the neck

just where his helmet stopped. He'd got *his*. I knew it by the way the head rolled in my hands. Then the others came up the ride totin' *their* load. No mistakin' that shuffle on grass. D'you remember it—in South Africa? Ya-as.

'"Hsh!" says Lundie. "Do you know I've broken this man's neck?"

'"Same here," I says.

'"What? Both?" says Mankeltow.

'"Nonsense!" says Lord Lundie. "Who'd have thought he was that out of training? A men oughtn't to fly if he ain't fit."

'"What did they want here, anyway?" said Walen; and Mankeltow says, "We can't leave them in the open. Some one'll come. Carry 'em to Flora's Temple."

'We toted 'em again and laid 'em out on a stone bench. They was still dead in spite of our best attentions. We knew it, but we went through the motions till it was quite dark. 'Wonder if all murderers do that? '"We want a light on this," says Walen after a spell. "There ought to be one in the machine. Why didn't they light it?"

'We came out of Flora's Temple, and shut the doors behind us. Some stars were showing then—same as when Cain did his little act, I guess. I climbed up and searched the machine. She was very well equipped. I found two electric torches in clips alongside her barometers by the rear seat.

'"What make is she?" says Mankeltow.

'"Continental Renzalaer," I says. "My engines and my Rush Silencer."

'Walen whistles. "Here—let me look," he says, and grabs the other torch. She was sure well equipped.

We gathered up an armful of cameras an' maps an' notebooks an' an album of mounted photographs which we took to Flora's Temple and spread on a marble-topped table (I'll show you to-morrow) which the King of Naples had presented to grandfather Marshalton. Walen starts to go through 'em. We wanted to know why our friends had been so prejudiced against our society.

"'Wait a minute," says Lord Lundie. "Lend me a handkerchief."

'He pulls out his own, and Walen contributes his green-and-red bandanna, and Lundie covers their faces. "Now," he says, "we'll go into the evidence."

There wasn't any flaw in that evidence. Walen read out their last observations, and Mankeltow asked questions, and Lord Lundie sort o' summarised, and I looked at the photos in the album. 'J'ever see a bird's-eye telephoto-survey of England for military purposes? It's interestin' but indecent—like turnin' a man upside down. None of those close-range panoramas of forts could have been taken without my Rush Silencer.

"'I wish *we* was as thorough as they are," says Mankeltow, when Walen stopped translatin'.

"'We've been thorough enough," says Lord Lundie. "The evidence against both accused is conclusive. Any other country would give 'em seven years in a fortress. We should probably give 'em eighteen months as first-class misdemeanants. But their case," he says, "is out of our hands. We must review our own. Mr. Zigler," he said, "will you tell us what steps you took to bring about the death of the first accused?" I told him. He wanted to know specially whether I'd stretched first accused before or after he had fired at Mankeltow.

Mankeltow testified he'd been shot at, and exhibited his neck as evidence. It was scorched.

'"Now, Mr. Walen," says Lord Lundie. "Will you kindly tell us what steps you took with regard to the second accused?"

'"The man ran directly at me, me lord," says Walen. "I said, 'Oh no, you don't,' and hit him in the face."

'Lord Lundie lifts one hand and uncovers second accused's face. There was a bruise on one cheek and the chin was all greened with grass. He was a heavy-built man.

'"What happened after that?" says Lord Lundie.

'"To the best of my remembrance he turned from me towards your lordship."

'Then Lundie goes ahead. "I stooped, and caught the man round the ankles," he says. "The sudden check threw him partially over my left shoulder. I jerked him off that shoulder, still holding his ankles, and he fell heavily on, it would appear, the point of his chin, death being instantaneous."

'"Death being instantaneous," says Walen.

'Lord Lundie takes off his gown and wig—you could see him do it—and becomes our fellow-murderer. "That's our case," he says. "I know how *I* should direct the jury, but it's an undignified business for a Lord of Appeal to lift his hand to, and some of my learned brothers," he says, "might be disposed to be facetious."

'I guess I can't be properly sensitised. Any one who steered me out of that trouble might have had the laugh on me for generations. But I'm only a millionaire. I said we'd better search second accused in case he'd been carryin' concealed weapons.

'"That certainly is a point," says Lord Lundie.

"But the question for the jury would be whether I exercised more force than was necessary to prevent him from usin' them." *I* didn't say anything. He wasn't talkin' my language. Second accused had his gun on him sure enough, but it had jammed in his hip-pocket. He was too fleshy to reach behind for business purposes, and he didn't look a gun-man anyway. Both of 'em carried wads of private letters. By the time Walen had translated, we knew how many children the fat one had at home and when the thin one reckoned to be married. Too bad! Ya-as.

'Says Walen to me while we was rebuttonin' their jackets (they was not in uniform): "Ever read a book called *The Wreckers*, Mr. Zigler?"

'"Not that I recall at the present moment," I says.

'"Well, do," he says. "You'd appreciate it. You'd appreciate it now, I assure you."

'"I'll remember," I says. "But I don't see how this song and dance helps us any. Here's our corpses, here's their machine, and daylight's bound to come."

'"Heavens! That reminds me," says Lundie. "What time's dinner?"

'"Half-past eight," says Mankeltow. "It's half-past five now. We knocked off golf at twenty to, and if they hadn't been such silly asses, firin' pistols like civilians, we'd have had them to dinner. Why, they might be sittin' with us in the smoking-room this very minute," he says. Then he said that no man had a right to take his profession so seriously as these two mountebanks.

'"How interestin'!" says Lundie. "I've noticed this impatient attitude toward their victim in a good many murderers. I never understood it before. Of course, it's the disposal of the body that annoys 'em. Now, I

wonder," he says, "who our case will come up before? Let's run through it again."

'Then Walen whirls in. He'd been bitin' his nails in a corner. We was all nerved up by now. . . . Me? The worst of the bunch. I had to think for Tommy as well.

'"We *can't* be tried," says Walen. "We *mustn't* be tried! It'll make an infernal international stink. What did I tell you in the smoking-room after lunch? The tension's at breaking-point already. This 'ud snap it. Can't you see that?"

'"I was thinking of the legal aspect of the case," says Lundie. "With a good jury we'd likely be acquitted."

'"Acquitted!" says Walen. "Who'd dare acquit us in the face of what 'ud be demanded by—the other party? Did you ever hear of the War of Jenkins' ear? 'Ever hear of Mason and Slidell? 'Ever hear of an ultimatum? You know who *these* two idiots are; you know who *we* are—a Lord of Appeal, a Viscount of the English peerage, and me—*me* knowing all I know, which the men who know dam' well know that I *do* know! It's our necks or Armageddon. Which do you think this Government would choose? We *can't* be tried!" he says.

'"Then I expect I'll have to resign me club," Lundie goes on. "I don't think that's ever been done before by an *ex-officio* member. I must ask the secretary." I guess he was kinder bunkered for the minute, or maybe 'twas the lordship comin' out on him.

'"Rot!" says Mankeltow. "Walen's right. We can't afford to be tried. We'll have to bury them; but my head-gardener locks up all the tools at five o'clock."

'"Not on your life!" says Lundie. He was on deck

again—as the high-class lawyer. "Right or wrong, if we attempt concealment of the bodies we're done for."

"'I'm glad of that," says Mankeltow, "because, after all, it ain't cricket to bury 'em."

'Somehow—but I know I ain't English—that consideration didn't worry me as it ought. An' besides, I was thinkin'—I had to—an' I'd begun to see a light 'way off—a little glimmerin' light o' salvation.

"'Then what *are* we to do?" says Walen. "Zigler, what do you advise? Your neck's in it too."

"'Gentlemen," I says, "something Lord Lundie let fall a while back gives me an idea. I move that this committee empowers Big Claus and Little Claus, who have elected to commit suicide in our midst, to leave the premises *as* they came. I'm asking you to take big chances," I says, "but they're all we've got," and then I broke for the bi-plane.

'Don't tell me the English can't think as quick as the next man when it's up to them! They lifted 'em out o' Flora's Temple—reverent, but not wastin' time—whilst I found out what had brought her down. One cylinder was misfirin'. I didn't stop to fix it. My Renzalaer will hold up on six. We've proved that. If her crew had relied on my guarantees, they'd have been half-way home by then, instead of takin' their seats with hangin' heads like they was ashamed. They ought to have been ashamed too, playin' gun-men in a British peer's park! I took big chances startin' her without controls, but 'twas a dead still night an' a clear run—you saw it—across the Theatre into the park, and I prayed she'd rise before she hit high timber. I set her all I dared for a quick lift. I told Mankeltow that if I gave her too much nose she'd be liable to up-end and

flop. He didn't want another inquest on his estate. No, sir! So I had to fix her up in the dark. Ya-as!

'I took big chances, too, while those other three held on to her and I worked her up to full power. My Renzalaer's no ventilation-fan to pull against. But I climbed out just in time. I'd hitched the signallin' lamp to her tail so's we could track her. Otherwise, with my Rush Silencer, we might's well have shooed an owl out of a barn. She left just that way when we let her go. No sound except the propellers—*Whoo-oo-oo! Whoo-oo-oo!* There was a dip in the ground ahead. It hid her lamp for a second—but there's no such thing as time in real life. Then that lamp travelled up the far slope slow—too slow. Then it kinder lifted, we judged. Then it sure was liftin'. Then it lifted good. D'you know why? Our four naked perspirin' souls was out there underneath her, hikin' her heavens high. Yes, sir. *We* did it! . . . And that lamp kept liftin' and liftin'. Then she side-slipped! My God, she side-slipped twice, which was what I'd been afraid of all along! Then she straightened up, and went away climbin' to glory, for that blessed star of our hope got smaller and smaller till we couldn't track it any more. Then we breathed. We hadn't breathed any since their arrival, but we didn't know it till we breathed that time—all together. Then we dug our finger-nails out of our palms an' came alive again—in instalments.

'Lundie spoke first. "We therefore commit their bodies to the air," he says, an' puts his cap on.

'"The deep—the deep," says Walen. "It's just twenty-three miles to the Channel."

'"Poor chaps! Poor chaps!" says Mankeltow. "We'd have had 'em to dinner if they hadn't lost their

heads. I can't tell you how this distresses me, Laughton."

"'Well, look at here, Arthur," I says. "It's only God's Own Mercy you an' me ain't lyin' in Flora's Temple now, and if that fat man had known enough to fetch his gun around while he was runnin', Lord Lundie and Walen would have been alongside us."

"'I see that," he says. "But we're alive and they're dead, don't ye know."

"'I know it," I says. "That's where the dead are always so damned unfair on the survivors."

"'I see that too," he says. "But I'd have given a good deal if it hadn't happened, poor chaps!"

"'Amen!" says Lundie. Then? Oh, then we sorter walked back two an' two to Flora's Temple an' lit matches to see we hadn't left anything behind. Walen, he had confiscated the note-books before they left. There was the first man's pistol, which we'd forgot to return him, lyin' on the stone bench. Mankeltow puts his hand on it—he never touched the trigger—an', bein' an automatic, of course the blame thing jarred off—spiteful as a rattler!

"'Look out! They'll have one of us yet," says Walen in the dark. But they didn't—the Lord hadn't quit being our shepherd—and we heard the bullet zip across the veldt—quite like old times. Ya-as!

"'Swine!" says Mankeltow.

'After that I didn't hear any more "Poor chap" talk. . . . Me? I never worried about killing *my* man. I was too busy figurin' how a British jury might regard the proposition. I guess Lundie felt that way too.

'Oh, but say! We had an interestin' time at dinner. Folks was expected whose auto had hung up on the road.

They hadn't wired, and Peters had laid two extra places. We noticed 'em as soon as we sat down. I'd hate to say how noticeable they were. Mankeltow with his neck bandaged (he'd caught a relaxed throat golfin') sent for Peters and told him to take those empty places away—*if you please*. It takes something to rattle Peters. He was rattled that time. Nobody else noticed anything. And now . . .'

'Where did they come down?' I asked, as he rose.

'In the Channel, I guess. There was nothing in the papers about 'em. Shall we go into the drawin'-room, and see what these boys and girls are doin'? But say, ain't life in England interestin'?'

REBIRTH

If any God should say
"I will restore
The world her yesterday
Whole as before
My Judgment blasted it"—who would not lift
Heart, eye, and hand in passion o'er the gift?

If any God should will
To wipe from mind
The memory of this ill
Which is mankind
In soul and substance now—who would not bless
Even to tears His loving-tenderness?

If any God should give
Us leave to fly
These present deaths we live,
And safely die
In those lost lives we lived ere we were born—
What man but would not laugh the excuse to scorn?

For we are what we are—
So broke to blood
And the strict works of war—
So long subdued
To sacrifice, that threadbare Death commands
Hardly observance at our busier hands.

Yet we were what we were,
And, fashioned so,
It pleases us to stare
At the far show
Of unbelievable years and shapes that flit,
In our own likeness, on the edge of it.

THE HORSE MARINES

(1911)

The Rt. Hon. R. B. Haldane, Secretary of State for War,[1] *was questioned in the House of Commons on April 8th about the rocking-horses which the War Office is using for the purpose of teaching recruits to ride. Lord Ronaldshay asked the War Secretary if rocking-horses were to be supplied to all the cavalry regiments for teaching recruits to ride. 'The noble Lord,' replied Mr. Haldane, 'is doubtless alluding to certain dummy horses on rockers which have been tested with very satisfactory results.' . . . The mechanical steed is a wooden horse with an astonishing tail. It is painted brown and mounted on swinging rails. The recruit leaps into the saddle and pulls at the reins while the riding-instructor rocks the animal to and fro with his foot. The rocking-horses are being made at Woolwich. They are quite cheap.*

Daily Paper.

MY instructions to Mr. Leggatt, my engineer, had been accurately obeyed. He was to bring my car on completion of annual overhaul, from Coventry *via* London, to Southampton Docks to await my arrival; and very pretty she looked, under the

[1]Now Viscount Haldane of Cloan.

steamer's side among the railway lines, at six in the morning. Next to her new paint and varnish I was most impressed by her four brand-new tyres.

'But I didn't order new tyres,' I said as we moved away. 'These are Irresilients, too.'

'Treble-ribbed,' said Leggatt. 'Diamond-stud sheathing.'

'Then there has been a mistake.'

'Oh no, sir; they're gratis.'

The number of motor manufacturers who give away complete sets of treble-ribbed Irresilient tyres is so limited that I believe I asked Leggatt for an explanation.

'I don't know that I could very well explain, sir,' was the answer. 'It 'ud come better from Mr. Pyecroft. He's on leaf at Portsmouth—staying with his uncle. His uncle 'ad the body all night. I'd defy you to find a scratch on her even with a microscope.'

'Then we will go home by the Portsmouth road,' I said.

And we went at those speeds which are allowed before the working-day begins or the police are thawed out. We were blocked near Portsmouth by a battalion of Regulars on the move.

'Whitsuntide manœuvres just ending,' said Leggatt. 'They've had a fortnight in the Downs.'

He said no more until we were in a narrow street somewhere behind Portsmouth Town Railway Station, where he slowed at a green-grocery shop. The door was open, and a small old man sat on three potato-baskets swinging his feet over a stooping blue back.

'You call that shinin' 'em?' he piped. 'Can you see your face in 'em yet? No! Then shine 'em, or I'll give you a beltin' you'll remember!'

'If you stop kickin' me in the mouth perhaps I'd do better,' said Pyecroft's voice meekly.

We blew the horn.

Pyecroft arose, put away the brushes, and received us not otherwise than as a king in his own country.

'Are you going to leave me up here all day?' said the old man.

Pyecroft lifted him down and he hobbled into the back room.

'It's his corns,' Pyecroft explained. 'You can't shine corny feet—and he hasn't had his breakfast.'

'I haven't had mine either,' I said.

'Breakfast for two more, uncle,' Pyecroft sang out.

'Go out an' buy it then,' was the answer, 'or else it's half-rations.'

Pyecroft turned to Leggatt, gave him his marketing orders, and despatched him with the coppers.

'I have got four new tyres on my car,' I began impressively.

'Yes,' said Mr. Pyecroft. 'You have, and I *will* say'—he patted my car's bonnet—'you earned 'em.'

'I want to know why——' I went on.

'Quite justifiable. You haven't noticed anything in the papers, have you?'

'I've only just landed. I haven't seen a paper for weeks.'

'Then you can lend me a virgin ear. There's been a scandal in the Junior Service—the Army, I believe they call 'em.'

A bag of coffee-beans pitched on the counter. 'Roast that,' said the uncle from within.

Pyecroft rigged a small coffee-roaster, while I took

down the shutters, and sold a young lady in curl-papers two bunches of mixed greens and one soft orange.

'Sickly stuff to handle on an empty stomach, ain't it?' said Pyecroft.

'What about my new tyres?' I insisted.

'Oh, any amount. But the question is'—he looked at me steadily—'is this what you might call a court-martial or a post-mortem inquiry?'

'Strictly a post-mortem,' said I.

'That being so,' said Pyecroft, 'we can rapidly arrive at facts. Last Thursday—the shutters go behind those baskets—last Thursday at five bells in the forenoon watch, otherwise ten-thirty A.M., your Mr. Leggatt was discovered on Westminster Bridge laying his course for the Old Kent Road.'

'But that doesn't lead to Southampton,' I interrupted.

'Then perhaps he was swinging the car for compasses. Be that as it may, we found him in that latitude, simultaneous as Jules and me was *ong route* for Waterloo to rejoin our respective ships—or Navies I should say. Jules was a *permissionaire*, which meant being on leaf, same as me, from a French cassowary-cruiser at Portsmouth. A party of her trusty and well-beloved petty officers 'ad been seeing London, chaperoned by the R.C. chaplain. Jules 'ad detached himself from the squadron and was cruisin' on his own when I joined him, in company of copious lady-friends. *But*, mark you, your Mr. Leggatt drew the line at the girls. Loud and long he drew it.'

'I'm glad of that,' I said.

'You may be. He adopted the puristical formation from the first. "Yes," he said, when we was annealing

him at—but you wouldn't know the pub—"I *am* going to Southampton," he says, "and I'll stretch a point to go *via* Portsmouth; *but*," says he, "seeing what sort of one hell of a time invariably trarnspires when we cruise together, Mr. Pyecroft, I do *not* feel myself justified towards my generous and long-suffering employer in takin' on that kind of ballast as well." I assure you he considered your interests.'

'And the girls?' I asked.

'Oh, I left that to Jules. I'm a monogomite by nature. So we embarked strictly *ong garçong*. But I should tell you, in case he didn't, that your Mr. Leggatt's care for your interests 'ad extended to sheathing the car in matting and gunny-bags to preserve her paint-work. She was all swathed up like an I-talian baby.'

'He *is* careful about his paint-work,' I said.

'For a man with no Service experience I should say he was fair homicidal on the subject. If we'd been Marines he couldn't have been more pointed in his allusions to our hob-nailed socks. However, we reduced him to a malleable condition, and embarked for Portsmouth. I'd seldom rejoined my *vaisseau ong automobile, avec* a fur coat and goggles. Nor 'ad Jules.'

'Did Jules say much?' I asked, helplessly turning the handle of the coffee-roaster.

'That's where I pitied the pore beggar. He 'adn't the language, so to speak. He was confined to heavings and shruggin's and copious *Mong Jews!* The French are very badly fitted with relief-valves. And then our Mr. Leggatt drove. He drove.'

'Was he in a very malleable condition?'

'Not him! We recognised the value of his cargo from the outset. He hadn't a chance to get more than moist

at the edges. After which we went to sleep; and now we'll go to breakfast.'

We entered the back room where everything was in order, and a screeching canary made us welcome. The uncle had added sausages and piles of buttered toast to the kippers. The coffee, cleared with a piece of fish-skin, was a revelation.

Leggatt, who seemed to know the premises, had run the car into the tiny backyard where her mirror-like back almost blocked up the windows. He minded shop while we ate. Pyecroft passed him his rations through a flap in the door. The uncle ordered him in, after breakfast, to wash up, and he jumped in his gaiters at the old man's commands as he has never jumped to mine.

'To resoom the post-mortem,' said Pyecroft, lighting his pipe. 'My slumbers were broken by the propeller ceasing to revolve, and by vile language from your Mr. Leggatt.'

'I—I——' Leggatt began, a blue-checked duster in one hand and a cup in the other.

'When you're wanted aft you'll be sent for, Mr. Leggatt,' said Pyecroft amiably. 'It's clean mess decks for you now. Resooming once more, we was on a lonely and desolate ocean near Portsdown, surrounded by gorse bushes, and a Boy Scout was stirring my stomach with his little copper-stick.'

'"You count ten," he says.

'"Very good, Boy Jones," I says, "count 'em," and I hauled him in over the gunnel, and ten I gave him with my large flat hand. The remarks he passed, lying face down tryin' to bite my leg, would have reflected credit on any Service. Having finished I dropped him over-

board again, which was my gross political error. I ought to 'ave killed him; because he began signalling—rapid and accurate—in a sou' westerly direction. Few equatorial calms are to be apprehended when B.P.'s little pets take to signallin'. Make a note o' that! Three minutes later we were stopped and boarded by Scouts—up our backs, down our necks, and in our boots! The last I heard from your Mr. Leggatt as he went under, brushin' 'em off his cap, was thanking Heaven he'd covered up the new paint-work with mats. An 'eroic soul!'

'Not a scratch on her body,' said Leggatt, pouring out the coffee-grounds.

'And Jules?' said I.

'Oh, Jules thought the much advertised Social Revolution had begun, but his mackintosh hampered him.'

'You told me to bring the mackintosh,' Leggatt whispered to me.

'And when I 'ad 'em half convinced he was a French vicomte coming down to visit the Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth, he tried to take it off. Seeing his uniform underneath, some sucking Sherlock Holmes of the Pink Eye Patrol (they called him Eddy) deduced that I wasn't speaking the truth. Eddy said I was tryin' to sneak into Portsmouth unobserved—unobserved mark you!—and join hands with the enemy. It trarnspired that the Scouts was conducting a field-day against opposin' forces, ably assisted by all branches of the Service, and they was so afraid the car wouldn't count ten points to them in the fray, that they'd have scalped us, but for the intervention of an umpire—also in short underdrawers. A fleshy sight!'

Here Mr. Pyecroft shut his eyes and nodded. 'That

umpire,' he said suddenly, 'was our Mr. Morshed—a gentleman whose acquaintance you have already made *and* profited by, if I mistake not.'[1]

'Oh, was the Navy in it too?' I said; for I had read of wild doings occasionally among the Boy Scouts on the Portsmouth Road, in which Navy, Army, and the world at large seemed to have taken part.

'The Navy *was* in it. I was the only one out of it—for several seconds. Our Mr. Morshed failed to recognise me in my fur boa, and my appealin' winks at 'im behind your goggles didn't arrive. But when Eddy darling had told his story, I saluted, which is difficult in furs, and I stated I was bringin' him dispatches from the North. My Mr. Morshed cohered on the instant. I've never known his ethergram installations out of order yet. "Go and guard your blessed road," he says to the Fratton Orphan Asylum standing at attention all round him, and, when they was removed—"Pyecroft," he says, still *sotte voce*, "what in Hong-Kong are you doing with this dun-coloured *sampan ?*"

'It was your Mr. Leggatt's paint-protective matting which caught his eye. She *did* resemble a *sampan*, especially about the stern-works. At these remarks I naturally threw myself on 'is bosom, so far as Service conditions permitted, and revealed him all, mentioning that the car was yours. You know his way of working his lips like a rabbit? Yes, he was quite pleased. "*His* car!" he kept murmuring, working his lips like a rabbit. "I owe 'im more than a trifle for things he wrote about me. I'll keep the car."

'Your Mr. Leggatt now injected some semi-mutinous

[1]Their Lawful Occasions,' *Traffics and Discoveries.*

remarks to the effect that he was your chauffeur in charge of your car, and, as such, capable of so acting. Mr. Morshed threw him a glarnce. It sufficed. Didn't it suffice, Mr. Leggatt?'

'I knew if something didn't happen, something worse would,' said Leggatt. 'It never fails when you're abroad.'

'And Jules?' I demanded.

'Jules was, so to speak, panicking in a water-tight flat through his unfortunate lack of language. I had to introduce him as part of the *entente cordiale*, and he was put under arrest, too. Then we sat on the grass and smoked, while Eddy and Co. violently annoyed the traffic on the Portsmouth Road, till the umpires, all in short panties, conferred on the valuable lessons of the field-day and added up points, same as at target-practice. I didn't hear their conclusions, but our Mr. Morshed delivered a farewell address to Eddy and Co., tellin' 'em they ought to have deduced from a hundred signs about me, that I was a friendly bringin' in dispatches from the North. We left 'em tryin' to find those signs in the Scout book, and we reached Mr. Morshed's hotel at Portsmouth at 6.27 P.M. *ong automobile.* Here endeth the first chapter.'

'Begin the second,' I said.

The uncle and Leggatt had finished washing up and were seated, smoking, while the damp duster dried at the fire.

'About what time was it,' said Pyecroft to Leggatt, 'when our Mr. Morshed began to talk about uncles?'

'When he came back to the bar, after he'd changed into those rat-catcher clothes,' said Leggatt.

'That's right, "Pye," said he, "have you an uncle?"

"I have," I says. "Here's santy to him," and I finished my sherry and bitters to *you*, uncle.'

'That's right,' said Pyecroft's uncle sternly. 'If you hadn't I'd have belted you worth rememberin', Emmanuel. I had the body all night.'

Pyecroft smiled affectionately. 'So you 'ad, uncle,' an' beautifully you looked after her. But as I was saying, "I have an uncle, too," says Mr. Morshed, dark and lowering. "Yet somehow I can't love him. I want to mortify the beggar. Volunteers to mortify my uncle, one pace to the front."

'I took Jules with me the regulation distance. Jules was getting interested. Your Mr. Leggatt preserved a strictly nootral attitude.

'"You're a pressed man," says our Mr. Morshed. "I owe your late employer much, so to say. The car will manœuvre all night, as requisite."

'Mr. Leggatt come out noble as your employee, and, by 'Eaven's divine grace, instead of arguing, he pleaded his new paint and varnish which was Mr. Morshed's one vital spot (he's lootenant on one of the new catch-'em-alive-o's now). "True," says he, "paint's an 'oly thing. I'll give you one hour to arrange a *modus vivendi*. Full bunkers and steam ready by 9 P.M. tonight, *if* you please."

'Even so, Mr. Leggatt was far from content. *I* 'ad to arrange the details. We run her into the yard here.' Pyecroft nodded through the window at my car's glossy back-panels. 'We took off the body with its mats and put it in the stable, substitooting (and that yard's a tight fit for extensive repairs) the body of uncle's blue delivery cart. It overhung a trifle, but after I'd lashed it I knew it wouldn't fetch loose. Thus, in our com-

posite cruiser, we repaired once more to the hotel, and was immediately dispatched to the toy-shop in the High Street where we took aboard one rocking-horse which was waiting for us.'

'Took aboard *what ?*' I cried.

'One fourteen-hand dapple-grey rocking-horse, with pure green rockers and detachable tail, pair gashly glass eyes, complete set 'orrible grinnin' teeth, and two bloody-red nostrils which, protruding from the brown papers, produced the *tout ensemble* of a Ju-ju sacrifice in the Benin campaign. Do I make myself comprehensible?'

'Perfectly. Did you say anything?' I asked.

'Only to Jules. To him, I says, wishing to try him, "*Allez à votre bateau. Je say mon Lootenong. Eel voo donneray porkwor.*" To me, says he, "*Vous ong ate hurroo ! Jamay de la vee !*" and I saw by his eye he'd taken on for the full term of the war. Jules was a blue-eyed, brindle-haired beggar of a useful make and inquirin' habits. Your Mr. Leggatt he only groaned.'

Leggatt nodded. 'It was like nightmares,' he said. 'It was like nightmares.'

'Once more, then,' Pyecroft swept on, 'we returned to the hotel and partook of a sumptuous repast, under the able and genial chairmanship of our Mr. Morshed, who laid his projecks unreservedly before us. "In the first place," he says, opening out bicycle-maps, "my uncle, who, I regret to say, is a brigadier-general, has sold his alleged soul to Dicky Bridoon for a feathery hat and a pair o' gilt spurs. Jules, *conspuez l'oncle !*" So Jules, you'll be glad to hear——'

'One minute, Pye,' I said. 'Who is Dicky Bridoon?'

'I don't usually mingle myself up with the bickerings

of the Junior Service, but it trarnspired that he was Secretary o' State for Civil War, an' he'd been issuing mechanical leather-belly gee-gees which doctors recommend for tumour to—the British cavalry in loo of real meat horses, to learn to ride on. Don't you remember there was quite a stir in the papers owing to the cavalry not appreciatin' 'em? But that's a minor item. The main point was that our uncle, in his capacity of brigadier-general, mark you, had wrote to the papers highly approvin' o' Dicky Bridoon's mechanical substitutes an ad' thus obtained promotion—all same as a agnosticle stoker psalm-singin' 'imself up the Service under a pious captain. At that point of the narrative we caught a phosphorescent glimmer why the rocking-horse might have been issued; but none the less the navigation was intricate. Omitting the fact it was dark and cloudy, our brigadier-uncle lay somewhere in the South Downs with his brigade, which was manœuvrin' at Whitsun manœuvres on a large scale—Red Army *versus* Blue, et cetera; an' all we 'ad to go by was those flapping bicycle-maps and your Mr. Leggatt's groans.'

'I was thinking what the Downs mean after dark,' said Leggatt angrily.

'They was worth thinkin' of,' said Pyecroft. 'When we had studied the map till it fair spun, we decided to sally forth and creep for uncle by hand in the dark, dark night, an' present 'im with the rocking-horse. So we embarked at 8.57 P.M.'

'One minute again, please. How much did Jules understand by that time?' I asked.

'Sufficient unto the day—or night, perhaps I should say. He told our Mr. Morshed he'd follow him *more sang frays*, which is French for dead, drunk or damned.

Barrin' 'is paucity o' language, there wasn't a blemish on Jules. But what I wished to imply was, when we climbed into the back parts of the car, our Lootenant Morshed says to me, "I doubt if I'd flick my cigar-ends about too lavish, Mr. Pyecroft. We ought to be sitting on five pounds' worth of selected fireworks, and I think the rockets are your end." Not being able to smoke with my 'ead over the side I threw it away; and then your Mr. Leggatt, 'aving been as nearly mutinous as it pays to be with my Mr. Morshed, arched his back and drove.'

'Where did he drive to, please?' said I.

'Primerrily, in search of any or either or both armies; seconderrily, of course, in search of our brigadier-uncle. Not finding him on the road, we ran about the grass looking for him. This took us to a great many places in a short time. 'Ow 'eavenly that lilac did smell on top of that first Down—stinkin' its blossomin' little heart out!'

'I 'adn't leesure to notice,' said Mr. Leggatt. 'The Downs were full o' chalk-pits, and we'd no lights.'

'We 'ad the bicycle-lamp to look at the map by. Didn't you notice the old lady at the window where we saw the man in the night-gown? I thought night-gowns as sleepin' rig was extinck, so to speak.'

'I tell you I 'adn't leesure to notice,' Leggatt repeated.

'That's odd. Then what might 'ave made you tell the sentry at the first camp we found that you was the *Daily Express* delivery-waggon?'

'You can't touch pitch without being defiled,' Leggatt answered. ''Oo told the officer in the bath we were umpires?'

'Well, he asked us. That was when we found the Territorial battalion undressin' in slow time. It lay on the left flank o' the Blue Army, and it cackled as it lay, too. But it gave us our position as regards the respective armies. We wandered a little more, and at 11.7 P.M., not having had a road under us for twenty minutes, we scaled the heights of something or other—which are about six hundred feet high. Here we 'alted to tighten the lashings of the superstructure, and we smelt leather and horses three counties deep all round. We was, as you might say, in the thick of it.'

'"Ah!" says my Mr. Morshed. "My 'orizon has indeed broadened. What a little thing is an uncle, Mr. Pyecroft, in the presence o' these glitterin' constellations! Simply ludicrous!" he says, "to waste a rocking-horse on an individual. We must socialise it. But we must get their 'eads up first. Touch off one rocket, if you please."

'I touched off a green three-pounder which rose several thousand metres, and burst into gorgeous stars. "Reproduce the manœuvre," he says, "at the other end o' this ridge—if it don't end in another cliff." So we steamed down the ridge a mile and a half east, and then I let Jules touch off a pink rocket, or he'd ha' kissed me. That was his only way to express his emotions, so to speak. Their heads come up then all around us to the extent o' thousands. We hears bugles like cocks crowing below, and on the top of it a most impressive sound which I'd never enjoyed before because 'itherto I'd always been an inteegral part of it, so to say—the noise of 'ole armies gettin' under arms. They must 'ave anticipated a night attack, I imagine. Most impressive. Then we 'eard a threshin'-machine. "Tutt!

Tutt! This is childish!" says Lootenant Morshed. "We can't wait till they've finished cutting chaff for their horses. We must make 'em understand we're not to be trifled with. Expedite 'em with another rocket, Mr. Pyecroft."

'"It's barely possible, sir," I remarks, "that that's a searchlight churnin' up," and by the time we backed into a providential chalk cutting (which was where our first tyre went pungo) she broke out to the northward, and began searching the ridge. A smart bit o' work.'

''Twasn't a puncture. The inner tube had nipped because we skidded so,' Leggatt interrupted.

'While your Mr. Leggatt was effectin' repairs, another searchlight broke out to the southward, and the two of 'em swept our ridge on both sides. Right at the west end of it they showed us the ground rising into a hill, so to speak, crowned with what looked like a little fort. Morshed saw it before the beams shut off. "That's the key of the position!" he says. "Occupy it at all hazards."

'"I haven't half got occupation for the next twenty minutes," says your Mr. Leggatt, rootin' and blasphemin' in the dark. Mark, now, 'ow Morshed changed his tactics to suit 'is environment. "Right!" says he. I'll stand by the ship. Mr. Pyecroft and Jules, oblige me by doubling along the ridge to the east with all the maroons and crackers you can carry without spilling. Read the directions careful for the maroons, Mr. Pyecroft, and touch them off at half-minute intervals. Jules represents musketry an' maxim fire under your command. Remember, it's death or Salisbury Gaol! Prob'ly both!"

'By these means and some moderately 'ard runnin',

we distracted 'em to the eastward. Maroons, you may not be aware, are same as bombs, with the anarchism left out. In confined spots like chalk-pits, they knock a four-point-seven silly. But you should read the directions before 'and. In the intervals of the slow but well-directed fire of my cow-guns, Jules, who had found a sheep-pond in the dark a little lower down, gave what you might call a cinematograph reproduction o' sporadic musketry. They was large size crackers, and he concluded with the dull, sickenin' thud o' blind shells burstin' on soft ground.'

'How did he manage that?' I said.

'You throw a lighted squib into water and you'll see,' said Pyecroft. 'Thus, then, we improvised till supplies was exhausted and the surrounding landscapes fair 'owled and 'ummed at us. The Junior Service might 'ave 'ad their doubts about the rockets, but they couldn't overlook our gunfire. Both sides tumbled out full of initiative. I told Jules no two flat-feet 'ad any right to be as happy as us, and we went back along the ridge to the derelict, and there was our Mr. Morshed apostrophin' his 'andiwork over fifty square mile o' country with "Attend, all ye who list to hear!" out of the Fifth Reader. He'd got as far as "And roused the shepherds o' Stonehenge, the rangers o' Beaulieu" when we come up, and he drew our attention to its truth as well as its beauty. That's rare in poetry, I'm told. He went right on to—"The red glare on Skiddaw roused those beggars at Carlisle"—which he pointed out was poetic licence for Leith Hill. This allowed your Mr. Leggatt time to finish pumpin' up his tyres. I 'eard the sweat 'op off his nose.'

'You know what it is, sir,' said poor Leggatt to me.

'It warfted across my mind, as I listened to what was trarnspirin', that it might be easier to make the mess than to wipe it up, but such considerations weighed not with our valiant leader.'

'"Mr. Pyecroft," he says, "it can't have escaped your notice that we 'ave one angry and 'ighly intelligent army in front of us, an' another 'ighly angry and equally intelligent army in our rear. What 'ud you recommend?"

'Most men would have besought 'im to do a lateral glide while there was yet time, but all I said was: "The rocking-horse isn't expended yet, sir."

'He laid his hand on my shoulder. "Pye," says he, "there's worse men than you in loftier places. They shall 'ave it. None the less," he remarks, "the ice is undeniably packing."

'I may 'ave omitted to point out that at this juncture two large armies, both deprived of their night's sleep, was awake, as you might say, and hurryin' into each other's arms. Here endeth the second chapter.'

He filled his pipe slowly. The uncle had fallen asleep. Leggatt lit another cigarette.

'We then proceeded *ong automobile* along the ridge in a westerly direction towards the miniature fort which had been so kindly revealed by the searchlight, but which on inspection (your Mr. Leggatt bumped into an outlyin' reef of it) proved to be a wurzel-clump; *c'est-à-dire*, a parallelogrammatic pile of about three million mangold-wurzels, brought up there for the sheep, I suppose. On all sides, excep' the one we'd come by, the ground fell away moderately quick, and down at the bottom there was a large camp lit up an' full of harsh words of command.

'"I said it was the key to the position," Lootenant Morshed remarks. "Trot out Persimmon!" which we rightly took to read, "Un-wrap the rocking-horse."

'"Houp la!" says Jules in a insubordinate tone, an' slaps Persimmon on the flank.

'"Silence!" says the Lootenant. "This is the Royal Navy, not Newmarket"; and we carried Persimmon to the top of the mangel-wurzel clump as directed.

'Owing to the inequalities of the terrain (I *do* think your Mr. Leggatt might have had a spirit-level in his kit) he wouldn't rock free on the bed-plate, and while adjustin' him, his detachable tail fetched adrift. Our Lootenant was quick to seize the advantage.

'"Remove that transformation," he says. "Substitute one Roman candle. Gas-power is superior to manual propulsion."

'So we substituted. He arranged the *pièce de resistarnce* in the shape of large drums—not saucers, mark you—drums of coloured fire, with printed instructions, at proper distances round Persimmon. There was a brief interregnum while we dug ourselves in among the wurzels by hand. Then he touched off the fires, *not* omitting the Roman candle, and, you may take it from me, all was visible. Persimmon shone out in his naked splendour, red to port, green to starboard, and one white light at his bows, as per Board o' Trade regulations. Only he didn't so much rock, you might say, as shrug himself, in a manner of speaking, every time the candle went off. One can't have everything. But the rest surpassed our highest expectations. I think Persimmon was noblest on the starboard or green side—more like when a man thinks he's seeing mackerel in hell, don't you know? And yet I'd be the last to deprecate the

effect of the port light on his teeth, or that blood-shot look in his left eye. He knew there was something going on he didn't approve of. He looked worried.'

'Did you laugh?' I said.

'I'm not much of a wag myself; nor it wasn't as if we 'ad time to allow the spectacle to sink in. The coloured fires was supposed to burn ten minutes, whereas it was obvious to the meanest capacity that the Junior Service would arrive by forced marches in about two and a half. They grarsped our topical allusion as soon as it was across the foot-lights, so to speak. They were quite chafed at it. Of course, 'ad we reflected, we might have known that exposin' illuminated rockin' horses to an army that was learnin' to ride on 'em partook of the nature of a *double entender*, as the French say—same as waggling the tiller lines at a man who's had a hanging in the family. I knew the cox of the *Archimandrite's* galley 'arf killed for a similar *plaisanteree*. But we never anticipated lobsters being so sensitive. That was why we shifted. We could 'ardly tear our commandin' officer away. He put his head on one side, and kept cooin'. The only thing he 'ad neglected to provide was a line of retreat; but your Mr. Leggatt—an 'eroic soul in the last stage of wet prostration—here took command of the van, or, rather, the rear-guard. We walked down-hill beside him, holding on to the superstructure to prevent her capsizing. These technical details, 'owever, are beyond me.' He waved his pipe towards Leggatt.

'I saw there was two deepish ruts leadin' down'ill somewhere,' said Leggatt. 'That was when the soldiers stopped laughin', and begun to run uphill.'

'Stroll, lovey, stroll!' Pyecroft corrected. 'The Dervish rush took place later.'

'So I laid her in these ruts. That was where she must 'ave scraped her silencer a bit. Then they turned sharp right—the ruts did—and then she stopped bonnet-high in a manure-heap, sir; but I'll swear it was all of a one in three gradient. I think it was a barnyard. We waited there,' said Leggatt.

'But not for long,' said Pyecroft. 'The lights were towering out of the drums on the position we 'ad so valiantly abandoned; and the Junior Service was escaladin' it *en masse*. When numerous bodies of 'ighly trained men arrive simultaneous in the same latitude from opposite directions, each remarkingbriskly, "What the 'ell did you do *that* for?" detonation, as you might say, is practically assured. They didn't ask for extraneous aids. If we'd come out with sworn affidavits of what we'd done they wouldn't 'ave believed us. They wanted each other's company exclusive. Such was the effect of Persimmon on their clarss feelings. Idol'try, *I* call it! Events trarnspired with the utmost velocity and rapidly increasing pressures. There was a few remarks about Dicky Bridoon and mechanical horses, and then some one was smacked—hard by the sound—in the middle of a remark.'

'That was the man who kept calling for the Forty-fifth Dragoons,' said Leggatt. 'He got as far as Drag . . .'

'Was it?' said Pyecroft dreamily. 'Well, he couldn't say they didn't come. They all came, and they all fell to arguin' whether the Infantry should 'ave Persimmon for a regimental pet or the Cavalry should keep him for stud purposes. Hence the issue was soon clouded with

mangold-wurzels. Our commander said we 'ad sowed the good seed, and it was bearing abundant fruit. (They weigh between four and seven pounds apiece.) Seein' the children 'ad got over their shyness, and 'ad really begun to play games, we backed out o' the pit and went down, by steps, to the camp below, no man, as you might say, making us afraid. Here we enjoyed a front view of the battle, which rolled with renewed impetus, owing to both sides receiving strong reinforcements every minute. All arms were freely represented; Cavalry, on this occasion only, acting in concert with Artillery. They argued the relative merits of horses *versus* feet, so to say, but they didn't neglect Persimmon. The wounded rolling downhill with the wurzels informed us that he had long ago been socialised, and the smallest souvenirs were worth a man's life. Speaking broadly, the Junior Service appeared to be a shade out of 'and, if I may venture so far. They did *not* pay prompt and unhesitating obedience to the "Retires" or the "Cease Fires" or the "For 'Eaven's sake come to bed, ducky" of their officers, who, I regret to say, were 'otly embroiled at the heads of their respective units.'

'How did you find that out?' I asked.

'On account of Lootenant Morshed going to the Mess tent to call on his uncle and raise a drink; but all hands had gone to the front. We thought we 'eard somebody bathing behind the tent, and we found an oldish gentleman tryin' to drown a boy in knickerbockers in a horse-trough. He kept him under with a bicycle, so to speak. He 'ad nearly accomplished his fell design, when we frustrated him. He was in a highly malleable condition and full o' *juice de spree*. "Arsk not what I

am," he says. "My wife 'll tell me that quite soon enough. Arsk rather what I've been," he says. "I've been dinin' here," he says. "I commanded 'em in the Eighties," he says, "and, Gawd forgive me," he says, sobbin' 'eavily, "I've spent this holy evening telling their Colonel they was a set of educated inefficients. Hark to 'em!" We could, without strainin' ourselves; but how *he* picked up the gentle murmur of his own corps in that on-the-knee party up the hill I don't know. "They've marched and fought thirty mile to-day," he shouts, "and now they're tearin' the intes*tines* out of the Cavalry up yonder! They won't stop this side the gates o' Delhi," he says. "I commanded their ancestors. There's nothing wrong with the Service," he says, wringing out his trousers on his lap. "'Eaven pardon me for doubtin' 'em! Same old game—same young beggars."

'The boy in the knickerbockers, languishing on a chair, puts in a claim for one drink. "Let him go dry," says our friend in shirt-tails. "He's a reporter. He run into me on his filthy bicycle and he asked me if I could furnish 'im with particulars about the mutiny in the Army. You false-'earted proletarian publicist," he says, shakin' his finger at 'im—for he was reelly annoyed—"I'll teach you to defile what you can't comprehend! When my regiment's in a state o' mutiny, I'll do myself the honour of informing you personally. You particularly ignorant and very narsty little man," he says, "you're no better than a dhobi's donkey! If there wasn't dirty linen to wash, you'd starve," he says, "and why I haven't drowned you will be the lastin' regret of my life."

'Well, we sat with 'em and 'ad drinks for about half-

an-hour in front of the Mess tent. He'd ha' killed the reporter if there hadn't been witnesses, and the reporter might have taken notes of the battle; so we acted as two-way buffers, in a sense. I don't hold with the Press mingling up with Service matters. They draw false conclusions. Now, mark you, at a moderate estimate, there were seven thousand men in the fighting line, half of 'em hurt in their professional feelings, an' the other half rubbin' in the liniment, as you might say. All due to Persimmon! If you 'adn't seen it you wouldn't 'ave believed it. And yet, mark you, not one single unit of 'em even resorted to his belt. They confined themselves to natural producks—hands and the wurzels. I thought Jules was havin' fits, till it trarnspired the same thought had impressed him in the French language. He called it *incroyable*, I believe. Seven thousand men, with seven thousand rifles, belts, and bayonets, in a violently agitated condition, and not a ungenteel blow struck from first to last. The old gentleman drew our attention to it as well. It was quite noticeable.

'Lack of ammunition was the primerry cause of the battle ceasin' A Brigade-Major came in, wipin' his nose on both cuffs, and sayin' he 'ad 'ad snuff. The brigadier-uncle followed. He was, so to speak, sneezin'. We thought it best to shift our moorings without attractin' attention; so we shifted. They 'ad called the cows 'ome by then. The Junior Service was going to bye-bye all round us, as happy as the ship's monkey when he's been playin' with the paints, and Lootenant Morshed and Jules kept bowin' to port and starboard of the superstructure, acknowledgin' the unstinted applause which the multitude would 'ave given 'em

if they'd known the facts. On the other 'and, as your Mr. Leggatt observed, they might 'ave killed us.

'That would have been about five bells in the middle watch, say half-past two. A well-spent evening. There was but little to be gained by entering Portsmouth at that hour, so we turned off on the grass (this was after we had found a road under us), and we cast anchors out at the stern and prayed for the day.

'But your Mr. Leggatt he had to make and mend tyres all our watch below. It transpired she had been running on the rim o' two or three wheels, which, very properly, he hadn't reported till the close of the action. And that's the reason of your four new tyres. Mr. Morshed was of opinion you'd earned 'em. Do you dissent?'

I stretched out my hand, which Pyecroft crushed to pulp. 'No, Pye,' I said, deeply moved, 'I agree entirely. But what happened to Jules?'

'We returned him to his own Navy after breakfast. He wouldn't have kept much longer without some one in his own language to tell it to. I don't know any man I ever took more compassion on than Jules. 'Is sufferings swelled him up centimetres, and all he could do on the Hard was to kiss Lootenant Morshed and me, *and* your Mr. Leggatt. He deserved that much. A cordial beggar.'

Pyecroft looked at the washed cups on the table, and the low sunshine on my car's back in the yard.

''Too early to drink to him,' he said. 'But I feel it just the same.'

The uncle, sunk in his chair, snored a little; the canary answered with a shrill lullaby. Pyecroft picked up the

duster, threw it over the cage, put his finger to his lips, and we tiptoed out into the shop, while Leggatt brought the car round.

'I'll look out for the news in the papers,' I said, as I got in.

'Oh, we short-circuited that! Nothing trarnspired excep' a statement to the effect that some Territorial battalions had played about with turnips at the conclusion of the manœuvres. The taxpayer don't know all he gets for his money. Farewell!'

We moved off just in time to be blocked by a regiment coming towards the station to entrain for London.

'Beg your pardon, sir,' said a sergeant in charge of the baggage, 'but would you mind backin' a bit till we get the waggons past?'

'Certainly,' I said. 'You don't happen to have a rocking-horse among your kit, do you?'

The rattle of our reserve drowned his answer, but I saw his eyes. One of them was blackish-green, about four days old.

THE LEGEND OF MIRTH

The Four Archangels, so the legends tell,
Raphael, Gabriel, Michael, Azrael,
Being first of those to whom the Power was shown,
Stood first of all the Host before The Throne,
And when the Charges were allotted burst
Tumultuous-winged from out the assembly first.
Zeal was their spur that bade them strictly heed
Their own high judgment on their lightest deed.
Zeal was their spur that, when relief was given,
Urged them unwearied to fresh toil in Heaven;
For Honour's sake perfecting every task
Beyond what e'en Perfection's self could ask. . . .
And Allah, Who created Zeal and Pride,
Knows how the twain are perilous-near allied.

It chanced on one of Heaven's long-lighted days,
The Four and all the Host having gone their ways
Each to his Charge, the shining Courts were void
Save for one Seraph whom no charge employed,
With folden wings and slumber-threatened brow.
To whom The Word: 'Beloved, what dost thou?'
'By the Permission,' came the answer soft,
'Little I do nor do that little oft.
As is The Will in Heaven so on Earth
Where by The Will I strive to make men mirth.'
He ceased and sped, hearing The Word once more:
'Beloved, go thy way and greet the Four.'

Systems and Universes overpast,
The Seraph came upon the Four, at last,
Guiding and guarding with devoted mind
The tedious generations of mankind
Who lent at most unwilling ear and eye
When they could not escape the ministry. . . .
Yet, patient, faithful, firm, persistent, just
Toward all that gross, indifferent, facile dust,
The Archangels laboured to discharge their trust
By precept and example, prayer and law,
Advice, reproof, and rule, but, labouring, saw
Each in his fellow's countenance confessed,
The Doubt that sickens: 'Have I done my best?'

Even as they sighed and turned to toil anew,
The Seraph hailed them with observance due;
And after some fit talk of higher things
Touched tentative on mundane happenings.
This they permitting, he, emboldened thus,
Prolused of humankind promiscuous.
And, since the large contention less avails
Than instances observed, he told them tales—
Tales of the shop, the bed, the court, the street,
Intimate, elemental, indiscreet:
Occasions where Confusion smiting swift

Piles jest on jest as snow-slides pile the drift
Whence, one by one, beneath derisive skies,
The victims bare, bewildered heads arise:
Tales of the passing of the spirit, graced
With humour blinding as the doom it faced:
Stark tales of ribaldry that broke aside
To tears, by laughter swallowed ere they dried:

Tales to which neither grace nor gain accrue,
But only (Allah be exalted!) true,
And only, as the Seraph showed that night,
Delighting to the limits of delight.

These he rehearsed with artful pause and halt,
And such pretence of memory at fault,
That soon the Four—so well the bait was thrown—
Came to his aid with memories of their own—
Matters dismissed long since as small or vain,
Whereof the high significance had lain
Hid, till the ungirt glosses made it plain.
Then, as enlightenment came broad and fast,
Each marvelled at his own oblivious past
Until—the Gates of Laughter opened wide—
The Four, with that bland Seraph at their side,
While they recalled, compared, and amplified,
In utter mirth forgot both zeal and pride.

High over Heaven the lamps of midnight burned
Ere, weak with merriment, the Four returned,
Not in that order they were wont to keep—
Pinion to pinion answering, sweep for sweep,
In awful diapason heard afar,
But shoutingly adrift 'twixt star and star.
Reeling a planet's orbit left or right
As laughter took them in the abysmal Night;
Or, by the point of some remembered jest,
Winged and brought helpless down through gulfs unguessed,

Where the blank worlds that gather to the birth
Leaped in the womb of Darkness at their mirth,
And e'en Gehenna's bondsmen understood.
They were not damned from human brotherhood.

Not first nor last of Heaven's high Host, the Four
That night took place beneath The Throne once more.
O lovelier than their morning majesty,
The understanding light behind the eye!
O more compelling than their old command,
The new-learned friendly gesture of the hand!
O sweeter than their zealous fellowship,
The wise half-smile that passed from lip to lip!
O well and roundly, when Command was given,
They told their tale against themselves to Heaven,
And in the silence, waiting on The Word,
Received the Peace and Pardon of The Lord!

'MY SON'S WIFE'

(1913)

HE had suffered from the disease of the century since his early youth, and before he was thirty he was heavily marked with it. He and a few friends had rearranged Heaven very comfortably, but the reorganisation of Earth, which they called Society, was even greater fun. It demanded Work in the shape of many taxi-rides daily; hours of brilliant talk with brilliant talkers; some sparkling correspondence; a few silences (but on the understanding that their own turn should come soon) while other people expounded philosophies; and a fair number of picture-galleries, tea-fights, concerts, theatres, music-halls, and cinema shows; the whole trimmed with love-making to women whose hair smelt of cigarette-smoke. Such strong days sent Frankwell Midmore back to his flat assured that he and his friends had helped the World a step nearer the Truth, the Dawn, and the New Order.

His temperament, he said, led him more towards concrete data than abstract ideas. People who investigate detail are apt to be tired at the day's end. The same temperament, or it may have been a woman, made him early attach himself to the Immoderate Left of his Cause in the capacity of an experimenter in Social Relations. And since the Immoderate Left contains

plenty of women anxious to help earnest inquirers with large independent incomes to arrive at evaluations of essentials, Frankwell Midmore's lot was far from contemptible.

At that hour Fate chose to play with him. A widowed aunt, widely separated by nature, and more widely by marriage, from all that Midmore's mother had ever been or desired to be, died and left him possessions. Mrs. Midmore, having that summer embraced a creed which denied the existence of death, naturally could not stoop to burial; but Midmore had to leave London for the dank country at a season when Social Regeneration works best through long, cushioned conferences, two by two, after tea. There he faced the bracing ritual of the British funeral, and was wept at across the raw grave by an elderly coffin-shaped female with a long nose, who called him 'Master Frankie'; and there he was congratulated behind an echoing top-hat by a man he mistook for a mute, who turned out to be his aunt's lawyer. He wrote his mother next day, after a bright account of the funeral:

'So far as I can understand, she has left me between four and five hundred a year. It all comes from Ther Land, as they call it down here. The unspeakable attorney, Sperrit, and a green-eyed daughter, who hums to herself as she tramps but is silent on all subjects except "huntin'," insisted on taking me to see it. Ther Land is brown and green in alternate slabs like chocolate and pistachio cakes, speckled with occasional peasants who do not utter. In case it should not be wet enough there is a wet brook in the middle of it. Ther House is by the brook. I shall look into it later. If there should be any little memento of Jenny that you care for, let me

know. Didn't you tell me that mid-Victorian furniture is coming into the market again? Jenny's old maid—it is called Rhoda Dolbie—tells me that Jenny promised it thirty pounds a year. The will does not. Hence, I suppose, the tears at the funeral. But that is close on ten per cent. of the income. I fancy Jenny has destroyed all her private papers and records of her *vie intime*, if, indeed, life be possible in such a place. The Sperrit man told me that if I had means of my own I might come and live on Ther Land. I didn't tell him how much I would pay not to! I cannot think it right that any human being should exercise mastery over others in the merciless fashion our tom-fool social system permits; so, as it is all mine, I intend to sell it whenever the unholy Sperrit can find a purchaser.'

And he went to Mr. Sperrit with the idea next day, just before returning to town.

'Quite so,' said the lawyer. 'I see your point, of course. But the house itself is rather old-fashioned—hardly the type purchasers demand nowadays. There's no park, of course, and the bulk of the land is let to a life-tenant, a Mr. Sidney. As long as he pays his rent, he can't be turned out, and even if he didn't'—Mr. Sperrit's face relaxed a shade—'you might have a difficulty.'

'The property brings four hundred a year, I understand,' said Midmore.

'Well, hardly—ha-ardly. Deducting land and income tax, tithes, fire insurance, cost of collection and repairs of course, it returned two hundred and eighty-four pounds last year. The repairs are rather a large item—owing to the brook. I call it Liris—out of Horace, you know.'

Midmore looked at his watch impatiently.

'I suppose you can find somebody to buy it?' he repeated.

'We will do our best, of course, if those are your instructions. Then, that is all except'—here Midmore half rose, but Mr. Sperrit's little grey eyes held his large brown ones firmly—'except about Rhoda Dolbie, Mrs. Werf's maid. I may tell you that we did not draw up your aunt's last will. She grew secretive towards the last—elderly people often do—and had it done in London. I expect her memory failed her, or she mislaid her notes. She used to put them in her spectacle-case. . . . My motor only takes eight minutes to get to the station, Mr. Midmore . . . but, as I was saying, whenever she made her will with *us*, Mrs. Werf always left Rhoda thirty pounds per annum. Charlie, the wills!' A clerk with a baldish head and a long nose dealt documents on to the table like cards, and breathed heavily behind Midmore. 'It's in no sense a legal obligation, of course,' said Mr. Sperrit. 'Ah, that one is dated January the 11th, eighteen eighty-nine.'

Midmore looked at his watch again and found himself saying with no good grace: 'Well, I suppose she'd better have it—for the present at any rate.'

He escaped with an uneasy feeling that two hundred and fifty-four pounds a year was not exactly four hundred, and that Charlie's long nose annoyed him. Then he returned, first-class, to his own affairs.

Of the two, perhaps three, experiments in Social Relations which he had then in hand, one interested him acutely. It had run for some months and promised most variegated and interesting developments, on which he dwelt luxuriously all the way to town. When he

reached his flat he was not well prepared for a twelve-page letter explaining, in the diction of the Immoderate Left which rubricates its I's and illuminates its T's, that the lady had realised greater attractions in another Soul. She re-stated, rather than pleaded, the gospel of the Immoderate Left as her justification, and ended in an impassioned demand for her right to express herself in and on her own life, through which, she pointed out, she could pass but once. She added that if, later, she should discover Midmore was 'essentially complementary to her needs,' she would tell him so. That Midmore had himself written much the same sort of epistle—barring the hint of return—to a woman of whom his needs for self-expression had caused him to weary three years before, did not assist him in the least. He expressed himself to the gas-fire in terms essential but not complimentary. Then he reflected on the detached criticism of his best friends and her best friends, male and female, with whom he and she and others had talked so openly while their gay adventure was in flower. He recalled, too—this must have been about midnight—her analysis from every angle, remote and most intimate, of the mate to whom she had been adjudged under the base convention which is styled marriage. Later, at that bad hour when the cattle wake for a little, he remembered her in other aspects and went down into the hell appointed; desolate, desiring, with no God to call upon. About eleven o'clock next morning Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite called upon him 'for they had made appointment together' to see how he took it; but the janitor told them that Job had gone—into the country, he believed.

Midmore's relief when he found his story was not

written across his aching temples for Mr. Sperrit to read —the defeated lover, like the successful one, believes all earth privy to his soul—was put down by Mr. Sperrit to quite different causes. He led him into a morning-room. The rest of the house seemed to be full of people, singing to a loud piano idiotic songs about cows, and the hall smelt of damp cloaks.

'It's our evening to take the winter cantata,' Mr. Sperrit explained. 'It's "High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire." I hoped you'd come back. There are scores of little things to settle. As for the house, of course, it stands ready for you at any time. I couldn't get Rhoda out of it—nor could Charlie for that matter. She's the sister, isn't she, of the nurse who brought you down here when you were four, she says, to recover from measles?'

'Is she? Was I?' said Midmore through the bad tastes in his mouth. 'D'you suppose I could stay there the night?'

Thirty joyous young voices shouted appeal to some one to leave their 'pipes of parsley 'ollow—'ollow—'ollow!' Mr. Sperrit had to raise his voice above the din.

'Well, if I asked you to stay *here*, I should never hear the last of it from Rhoda. She's a little cracked, of course, but the soul of devotion and capable of anything. *Ne sit ancillae*, you know.'

'Thank you. Then I'll go. I'll walk.' He stumbled out dazed and sick into the winter twilight, and sought the square house by the brook.

It was not a dignified entry, because when the door was unchained and Rhoda exclaimed, he took two valiant steps into the hall and then fainted—as men

sometimes will after twenty-two hours of strong emotion and little food.

'I'm sorry,' he said when he could speak. He was lying at the foot of the stairs, his head on Rhoda's lap.

'Your 'ome is your castle, sir,' was the reply in his hair. 'I smelt it wasn't drink. You lay on the sofa till I get your supper.'

She settled him in a drawing-room hung with yellow silk, heavy with the smell of dead leaves and oil lamp. Something murmured soothingly in the background and overcame the noises in his head. He thought he heard horses' feet on wet gravel and a voice singing about ships and flocks and grass. It passed close to the shuttered bay-window.

> But each will mourn his own, she saith,
> And sweeter woman ne'er drew breath
> Than my son's wife, Elizabeth . . .
> Cusha—cusha—cusha—calling.

The hoofs broke into a canter as Rhoda entered with the tray. 'And then I'll put you to bed,' she said. 'Sidney's coming in the morning.' Midmore asked no questions. He dragged his poor bruised soul to bed and would have pitied it all over again, but the food and warm sherry and water drugged him to instant sleep.

Rhoda's voice wakened him, asking whether he would have ''ip, foot, or sitz,' which he understood were the baths of the establishment. 'Suppose you try all three,' she suggested. 'They're all yours, you know, sir.'

He would have renewed his sorrows with the daylight, but her words struck him pleasantly. Everything his

eyes opened upon was his very own to keep for ever. The carved four-post Chippendale bed, obviously worth hundreds; the wavy walnut William and Mary chairs—he had seen worse ones labelled twenty guineas apiece; the oval medallion mirror; the delicate eighteenth-century wire fireguard; the heavy brocaded curtains were his—all his. So, too, a great garden full of birds that faced him when he shaved; a mulberry tree, a sun-dial, and a dull, steel-coloured brook that murmured level with the edge of a lawn a hundred yards away. Peculiarly and privately his own was the smell of sausages and coffee that he sniffed at the head of the wide square landing, all set round with mysterious doors and Bartolozzi prints. He spent two hours after breakfast in exploring his new possessions. His heart leaped up at such things as sewing-machines, a rubber-tyred bath-chair in a tiled passage, a malachite-headed Malacca cane, boxes and boxes of unopened stationery, seal-rings, bunches of keys, and at the bottom of a steel-net reticule a little leather purse with seven pounds ten shillings in gold and eleven shillings in silver.

'You used to play with that when my sister brought you down here after your measles,' said Rhoda as he slipped the money into his pocket. 'Now, this was your pore dear auntie's business-room.' She opened a low door. 'Oh, I forgot about Mr. Sidney! There he is.' An enormous old man with rheumy red eyes that blinked under downy white eyebrows sat in an Empire chair, his cap in his hands. Rhoda withdrew sniffing. The man looked Midmore over in silence, then jerked a thumb towards the door. 'I reckon she told you who I be,' he began. 'I'm the only farmer you've got. Nothin' goes

off my place 'thout it walks on its own feet. What about my pig-pound?'

'Well, what about it?' said Midmore.

'That's just what I be come about. The County Councils are getting more particular. Did ye know there was swine fever at Pashell's? There *be*. It'll 'ave to be in brick.'

'Yes,' said Midmore politely.

'I've bin at your aunt that was, plenty times about it. I don't say she wasn't a just woman, but she didn't read the lease same way I did. I be used to bein' put upon, but there's no doing any longer 'thout that pig-pound.'

'When would you like it?' Midmore asked. It seemed the easiest road to take.

'Any time or other suits me, I reckon. He ain't thrivin' where he is, an' I paid eighteen shillin' for him.' He crossed his hands on his stick and gave no further sign of life.

'Is that all?' Midmore stammered.

'All now—excep''—he glanced fretfully at the table beside him—'excep' my usuals. Where's that Rhoda?'

Midmore rang the bell. Rhoda came in with a bottle and a glass. The old man helped himself to four stiff fingers, rose in one piece, and stumped out. At the door he cried ferociously: 'Don't suppose it's any odds to you whether I'm drowned or not, but them floodgates want a wheel and winch, they do. I be too old for liftin' 'em with the bar—my time o' life.'

'Good riddance if 'e was drowned,' said Rhoda. 'But don't you mind him. He's only amusin' himself. Your pore dear auntie used to give 'im 'is usual—'tisn't the whisky *you* drink—an' send 'im about 'is business.'

'I see. Now, is a pig-pound the same thing as a pig-sty?'

Rhoda nodded. ''E needs one, too, but 'e ain't entitled to it. You look at 'is lease—third drawer on the left in that Bombay cab'net—an' next time 'e comes you ask 'im to read it. That'll choke 'im off, because 'e can't!'

There was nothing in Midmore's past to teach him the message and significance of a hand-written lease of the late 'eighties, but Rhoda interpreted.

'It don't mean anything reelly,' was her cheerful conclusion, 'excep' you mustn't get rid of him anyhow, an' 'e can do what 'e likes always. Lucky for us 'e *do* farm; and if it wasn't for 'is woman——'

'Oh, there's a Mrs. Sidney, is there?'

'Lor, *no!* The Sidneys don't marry. They keep. That's his fourth since—to my knowledge. He was a takin' man from the first.'

'Any families?'

'They'd be grown up by now if there was, wouldn't they? But you can't spend all your days considerin' 'is interests. That's what gave your pore aunt 'er indigestion. 'Ave you seen the gun-room?'

Midmore held strong views on the immorality of taking life for pleasure. But there was no denying that the late Colonel Werf's seventy-guinea breechloaders were good at their filthy job. He loaded one, took it out and pointed—merely pointed—it at a cock-pheasant which rose out of a shrubbery behind the kitchen, and the flaming bird came down in a long slant on the lawn, stone dead. Rhoda from the scullery said it was a lovely shot, and told him lunch was ready.

He spent the afternoon gun in one hand, a map in the

other, beating the bounds of his lands. They lay altogether in a shallow, uninteresting valley, flanked with woods and bisected by a brook. Up stream was his own house; down stream, less than half a mile, a low red farm-house squatted in an old orchard, beside what looked like small lock-gates on the Thames. There was no doubt as to ownership. Mr. Sidney saw him while yet far off, and bellowed at him about pig-pounds and floodgates. These last were two great sliding shutters of weedy oak across the brook, which were prised up inch by inch with a crowbar along a notched strip of iron, and when Sidney opened them they at once let out half the water. Midmore watched it shrink between its aldered banks like some conjuring trick. This, too, was his very own.

'I see,' he said. 'How interesting! Now, what's that bell for?' he went on, pointing to an old ship's bell in a rude belfry at the end of an outhouse. 'Was that a chapel once?' The red-eyed giant seemed to have difficulty in expressing himself for the moment and blinked savagely.

'Yes,' he said at last. 'My chapel. When you 'ear that bell ring you'll 'ear something. Nobody but me ud put up with it—but I reckon it don't make any odds to you.' He slammed the gates down again, and the brook rose behind them with a suck and a grunt.

Midmore moved off, conscious that he might be safer with Rhoda to hold his conversational hand. As he passed the front of the farm-house a smooth fat woman, with neatly parted grey hair under a widow's cap, curtsied to him deferentially through the window. By every teaching of the Immoderate Left she had a perfect right to express herself in any way she pleased, but the

curtsey revolted him. And on his way home he was hailed from behind a hedge by a manifest idiot with no roof to his mouth, who hallooed and danced round him.

'What did that beast want?' he demanded of Rhoda at tea.

'Jimmy? He only wanted to know if you 'ad any telegrams to send. 'E'll go anywhere so long as 'tisn't across running water. That gives 'im 'is seizures. Even talkin' about it for fun like makes 'im shake.'

'But why isn't he where he can be properly looked after?'

'What 'arm's 'e doing? 'E's a love-child, but 'is family can pay for 'im. If 'e was locked up 'e'd die all off at once, like a wild rabbit. Won't you, please, look at the drive, sir?'

Midmore looked in the fading light. The neat gravel was pitted with large roundish holes, and there was a punch or two of the same sort on the lawn.

'That's the 'unt comin' 'ome,' Rhoda explained. 'Your pore dear auntie always let 'em use our drive for a short cut after the Colonel died. The Colonel wouldn't so much because he preserved; but your auntie was always an 'orsewoman till 'er sciatica.'

'Isn't there some one who can rake it over or—or something?' said Midmore vaguely.

'Oh yes. You'll never see it in the morning, but—you was out when they came 'ome an' Mister Fisher—he's the Master—told me to tell you with 'is compliments that if you wasn't preservin' and cared to 'old to the old understandin', 'is gravel-pit is at your service same as before. 'E thought, perhaps, you mightn't know, and it 'ad slipped my mind to tell you. It's good gravel, Mister Fisher's, and it binds beautiful on the

drive. We 'ave to draw it, o' course, from the pit, but——'

Midmore looked at her helplessly.

'Rhoda,' said he, 'what am I supposed to do?'

'Oh, let 'em come through,' she replied. 'You never know. You may want to 'unt yourself some day.'

That evening it rained and his misery returned on him, the worse for having been diverted. At last he was driven to paw over a few score books in a panelled room called the library, and realised with horror what the late Colonel Werf's mind must have been in its prime. The volumes smelt of a dead world as strongly as they did of mildew. He opened and thrust them back, one after another, till crude coloured illustrations of men on horses held his eye. He began at random and read a little, moved into the drawing-room with the volume, and settled down by the fire still reading. It was a foul world into which he peeped for the first time —a heavy-eating, hard-drinking hell of horse-copers, swindlers, matchmaking mothers, economically dependent virgins selling themselves blushingly for cash and lands: Jews, tradesmen, and an ill-considered spawn of Dickens-and-horsedung characters (I give Midmore's own criticism), but he read on, fascinated, and behold, from the pages leaped, as it were, the brother to the red-eyed man of the brook, bellowing at a landlord (here Midmore realised that *he* was that very animal) for new barns; and another man who, like himself again, objected to hoof-marks on gravel. Outrageous as thought and conception were, the stuff seemed to have the rudiments of observation. He dug out other volumes by the same author, till Rhoda came in with a silver candlestick.

'Rhoda,' said he, 'did you ever hear about a character called James Pigg—and Batsey?'

'Why, o' course,' said she. 'The Colonel used to come into the kitchen in 'is dressin'-gown an' read us all those Jorrockses.'

'Oh, Lord!' said Midmore, and went to bed with a book called *Handley Cross* under his arm, and a lonelier Columbus into a stranger world the wet-ringed moon never looked upon.

. . . . . .

Here we omit much. But Midmore never denied that for the epicure in sensation the urgent needs of an ancient house, as interpreted by Rhoda pointing to daylight through attic-tiles held in place by moss, gives an edge to the pleasure of Social Research elsewhere. Equally he found that the reaction following prolonged research loses much of its grey terror if one knows one can at will bathe the soul in the society of plumbers (all the water-pipes had chronic appendicitis), village idiots (Jimmy had taken Midmore under his weak wing and camped daily at the drive-gates), and a giant with red eyelids whose every action is an unpredictable outrage.

Towards spring Midmore filled his house with a few friends of the Immoderate Left. It happened to be the day when, all things and Rhoda working together, a cartload of bricks, another of sand, and some bags of lime had been despatched to build Sidney his almost daily-demanded pig-pound. Midmore took his friends across the flat fields with some idea of showing them Sidney as a type of 'the peasantry.' They hit the minute when Sidney, hoarse with rage, was ordering

bricklayer, mate, carts and all off his premises. The visitors disposed themselves to listen.

'You never give me no notice about changin' the pig,' Sidney shouted. The pig—at least eighteen inches long—reared on end in the old sty and smiled at the company.

'But, my good man——' Midmore opened.

'I ain't! For aught you know I be a dam' sight worse than you be. You can't come and be'ave arbit'ry with me. You *are* be'avin' arbit'ry! All you men go clean away an' don't set foot on my land till I bid ye.'

'But you asked'—Midmore felt his voice jump up—'to have the pig-pound built.'

''Spose I did. That's no reason you shouldn't send me notice to change the pig. 'Comin' down on me like this 'thout warnin'! That pig's got to be got into the cowshed an' all.'

'Then open the door and let him run in,' said Midmore.

'Don't you be'ave arbit'ry with *me!* Take all your dam' men 'ome off my land. I won't be treated arbit'ry.'

The carts moved off without a word, and Sidney went into the house and slammed the door.

'Now, I hold that is enormously significant,' said a visitor. 'Here you have the logical outcome of centuries of feudal oppression—the frenzy of fear.' The company looked at Midmore with grave pain.

'But he *did* worry my life out about his pig-sty,' was all Midmore found to say.

Others took up the parable and proved to him if he only held true to the gospels of the Immoderate Left the earth would soon be covered with 'jolly little' pig-

sties, built in the intervals of morris-dancing by 'the peasant' himself.

Midmore felt grateful when the door opened again and Mr. Sidney invited them all to retire to the road which, he pointed out, was public. As they turned the corner of the house, a smooth-faced woman in a widow's cap curtsied to each of them through the window.

Instantly they drew pictures of that woman's lot, deprived of all vehicle for self-expression—'the set grey life and apathetic end,' one quoted—and they discussed the tremendous significance of village theatricals. Even a month ago Midmore would have told them all that he knew and Rhoda had dropped about Sidney's forms of self-expression. Now, for some strange reason, he was content to let the talk run on from village to metropolitan and world drama.

Rhoda advised him after the visitors left that 'if he wanted to do that again' he had better go up to town.

'But we only sat on cushions on the floor,' said her master.

'They're too old for romps,' she retorted, 'an' it's only the beginning of things. I've seen what *I've* seen. Besides, they talked and laughed in the passage going to their baths—such as took 'em.'

'Don't be a fool, Rhoda,' said Midmore. No man—unless he has loved her—will casually dismiss a woman on whose lap he has laid his head.

'Very good,' she snorted, 'but that cuts both ways. An' now, you go down to Sidney's this evenin' and put him where he ought to be. He was in his right about you givin' 'im notice about changin' the pig, but he 'adn't any right to turn it up before your company. No manners, no pig-pound. He'll understand.'

Midmore did his best to make him. He found himself reviling the old man in speech and with a joy quite new in all his experience. He wound up—it was a plagiarism from a plumber—by telling Mr. Sidney that he looked like a turkey-cock, had the morals of a parish bull, and need never hope for a new pig-pound as long as he or Midmore lived.

'Very good,' said the giant. 'I reckon you thought you 'ad something against me, and now you've come down an' told it me like man to man. Quite right. I don't bear malice. Now, you send along those bricks an' sand, an' I'll make a do to build the pig-pound myself. If you look at my lease you'll find out you're bound to provide me materials for the repairs. Only—only I thought there'd be no 'arm in my askin' you to do it throughout like.'

Midmore fairly gasped. 'Then, why the devil did you turn my carts back when—when I sent them up here to do it throughout for you?'

Mr. Sidney sat down on the floodgates, his eyebrows knitted in thought.

'I'll tell you,' he said slowly. ''Twas too dam' like cheatin' a suckin' baby. My woman, she said so too.'

For a few seconds the teachings of the Immoderate Left, whose humour is all their own, wrestled with those of Mother Earth, who has her own humours. Then Midmore laughed till he could scarcely stand. In due time Mr. Sidney laughed too—crowing and wheezing crescendo till it broke from him in roars. They shook hands, and Midmore went home grateful that he had held his tongue among his companions.

When he reached his house he met three or four men and women on horseback, very muddy indeed, coming

down the drive. Feeling hungry himself, he asked them if they were hungry. They said they were, and he bade them enter. Jimmy took their horses, who seemed to know him. Rhoda took their battered hats, led the women upstairs for hairpins, and presently fed them all with tea-cakes, poached eggs, anchovy toast, and drinks from a coromandel-wood liqueur case which Midmore had never known that he possessed.

'And I *will* say,' said Miss Connie Sperrit, her spurred foot on the fender and a smoking muffin in her whip hand, 'Rhoda does one top-hole. She always did since I was eight.'

'Seven, Miss, was when you began to 'unt,' said Rhoda, setting down more buttered toast.

'And so,' the M.F.H. was saying to Midmore, 'when he got to your brute Sidney's land, we had to whip 'em off. It's a regular Alsatia for 'em. They know it. Why'—he dropped his voice—'I don't want to say anything against Sidney as your tenant, of course, but I do believe the old scoundrel's perfectly capable of putting down poison.'

'Sidney's capable of anything,' said Midmore with immense feeling; but once again he held his tongue. They were a queer community; yet when they had stamped and jingled out to their horses again, the house felt hugely big and disconcerting.

This may be reckoned the conscious beginning of his double life. It ran in odd channels that summer—a riding school, for instance, near Hayes Common and a shooting ground near Wormwood Scrubs. A man who has been saddle-galled or shoulder-bruised for half the day is not at his London best of evenings; and when the bills for his amusements come in he curtails his expenses

in other directions. So a cloud settled on Midmore's name. His London world talked of a hardening of heart and a tightening of purse-strings which signified disloyalty to the Cause. One man, a confidant of the old expressive days, attacked him robustiously and demanded account of his soul's progress. It was not furnished, for Midmore was calculating how much it would cost to repave stables so dilapidated that even the village idiot apologised for putting visitors' horses into them. The man went away, and served up what he had heard of the pig-pound episode as a little newspaper sketch, calculated to annoy. Midmore read it with an eye as practical as a woman's, and since most of his experiences had been among women, at once sought out a woman to whom he might tell his sorrow at the disloyalty of his own familiar friend. She was so sympathetic that he went on to confide how his bruised heart—she knew all about it—had found so-lace, with a long O, in another quarter which he indicated rather carefully in case it might be betrayed to other loyal friends. As his hints pointed directly towards facile Hampstead, and as his urgent business was the purchase of a horse from a dealer, Beckenham way, he felt he had done good work. Later, when his friend, the scribe, talked to him alluringly of 'secret gardens' and those so-laces to which every man who follows the Wider Morality is entitled, Midmore lent him a five-pound note which he had got back on the price of a ninety-guinea bay gelding. So true it is, as he read in one of the late Colonel Werf's books, that 'the young man of the present day would sooner lie under an imputation against his morals than against his knowledge of horse-flesh.'

Midmore desired more than he desired anything else at that moment to ride and, above all, to jump on a ninety-guinea bay gelding with black points and a slovenly habit of hitting his fences. He did not wish many people except Mr. Sidney, who very kindly lent his soft meadow behind the floodgates, to be privy to the matter, which he rightly foresaw would take him to the autumn. So he told such friends as hinted at country week-end visits that he had practically let his newly inherited house. The rent, he said, was an object to him, for he had lately lost large sums through ill-considered benevolences. He would name no names, but they could guess. And they guessed loyally all round the circle of his acquaintance as they spread the news that explained so much.

There remained only one couple of his once intimate associates to pacify. They were deeply sympathetic and utterly loyal, of course, but as curious as any of the apes whose diet they had adopted. Midmore met them in a suburban train, coming up to town, not twenty minutes after he had come off two hours' advanced tuition (one guinea an hour) over hurdles in a hall. He had, of course, changed his kit, but his too heavy bridle-hand shook a little among the newspapers. On the inspiration of the moment, which is your natural liar's best hold, he told them that he was condemned to a rest-cure. He would lie in semi-darkness drinking milk, for weeks and weeks, cut off even from letters. He was astonished and delighted at the ease with which the usual lie confounds the unusual intellect. They swallowed it as swiftly as they recommended him to live on nuts and fruit; but he saw in the woman's eyes the exact reason she would set forth for his retirement. After

all, she had as much right to express herself as he purposed to take for himself; and Midmore believed strongly in the fullest equality of the sexes.

That retirement made one small ripple in the strenuous world. The lady who had written the twelve-page letter ten months before sent him another of eight pages, analysing all the motives that were leading her back to him—should she come?—now that he was ill and alone. Much might yet be retrieved, she said, out of the waste of jarring lives and piteous misunderstandings. It needed only a hand.

But Midmore needed two, next morning very early, for a devil's diversion, among wet coppices, called 'cubbing.'

'You haven't a bad seat,' said Miss Sperrit through the morning-mists. 'But you're worrying him.'

'He pulls so,' Midmore grunted.

'Let him alone, then. Look out for the branches,' she shouted, as they whirled up a splashy ride. Cubs were plentiful. Most of the hounds attached themselves to a straight-necked youngster of education who scuttled out of the woods into the open fields below.

'Hold on!' some one shouted. 'Turn 'em, Midmore. That's your brute Sidney's land. It's all wire.'

'Oh, Connie, stop!' Mrs. Sperrit shrieked as her daughter charged at a boundary-hedge.

'Wire be damned! I had it all out a fortnight ago. Come on!' This was Midmore, buffeting into it a little lower down.

'*I* knew that!' Connie cried over her shoulder, and she flitted across the open pasture, humming to herself.

'Oh, of course! If some people have private information, they can afford to thrust.' This was a snuff-

coloured habit into which Miss Sperrit had cannoned down the ride.

'What! 'Midmore got Sidney to heel? *You* never did that, Sperrit.' This was Mr. Fisher, M.F.H., enlarging the breach Midmore had made.

'No, confound him!' said the father testily. 'Go on, sir! *Injecto ter pulvere*—you've kicked half the ditch into my eye already.'

They killed that cub a little short of the haven his mother had told him to make for—a two-acre Alsatia of a gorse-patch to which the M.F.H. had been denied access for the last fifteen seasons. He expressed his gratitude before all the field and Mr. Sidney, at Mr. Sidney's farmhouse door.

'And if there should be any poultry claims——' he went on.

'There won't be,' said Midmore. 'It's too like cheating a sucking child, isn't it, Mr. Sidney?'

'You've got me!' was all the reply. 'I be used to bein' put upon, but you've got me, Mus' Midmore.'

Midmore pointed to a new brick pig-pound built in strict disregard of the terms of the life-tenant's lease. The gesture told the tale to the few who did not know, and they shouted.

Such pagan delights as these were followed by pagan sloth of evenings when men and women elsewhere are at their brightest. But Midmore preferred to lie out on a yellow silk couch, reading works of a debasing vulgarity; or, by invitation, to dine with the Sperrits and savages of their kidney. These did not expect flights of fancy or phrasing. They lied, except about horses, grudgingly and of necessity, not for art's sake; and, men and women alike, they expressed themselves along

their chosen lines with the serene indifference of the larger animals. Then Midmore would go home and identify them, one by one, out of the natural-history books by Mr. Surtees, on the table beside the sofa. At first they looked upon him coolly, but when the tale of the removed wire and the recaptured gorse had gone the rounds, they accepted him for a person willing to play their games. True, a faction suspended judgment for a while, because they shot, and hoped that Midmore would serve the glorious mammon of pheasant-raising rather than the unkempt god of fox-hunting. But after he had shown his choice, they did not ask by what intellectual process he had arrived at it. He hunted three, sometimes four, times a week, which necessitated not only one bay gelding (£94: 10s.), but a mannerly white-stockinged chestnut (£114), and a black mare, rather long in the back but with a mouth of silk (£150), who so evidently preferred to carry a lady that it would have been cruel to have baulked her. Besides, with that handling she could be sold at a profit. And besides, the hunt was a quiet, intimate, kindly little hunt, not anxious for strangers, of good report in the *Field*, the servant of one M.F.H., given to hospitality, riding well its own horses, and, with the exception of Midmore, not novices. But as Miss Sperrit observed, after the M.F.H. had said some things to him at a gate: 'It *is* a pity you don't know as much as your horse, but you will in time. It takes years and yee-ars. I've been at it for fifteen and I'm only just learning. But you've made a decent kick-off.'

So he kicked off in wind and wet and mud, wondering quite sincerely why the bubbling ditches and sucking pastures held him from day to day, or what so-lace he

could find on off days in chasing grooms and bricklayers round outhouses.

To make sure he up-rooted himself one week-end of heavy mid-winter rain, and re-entered his lost world in the character of Galahad fresh from a rest-cure. They all agreed, with an eye over his shoulder for the next comer, that he was a different man; but when they asked him for the symptoms of nervous strain, and led him all through their own, he realised he had lost much of his old skill in lying. His three months' absence, too, had put him hopelessly behind the London field. The movements, the allusions, the slang of the game had changed. The couples had rearranged themselves or were re-crystallizing in fresh triangles, whereby he put his foot in it badly. Only one great soul (he who had written the account of the pig-pound episode) stood untouched by the vast flux of time, and Midmore lent him another fiver for his integrity. A woman took him, in the wet forenoon, to a pronouncement on the Oneness of Impulse in Humanity, which struck him as a polysyllabic *résumé* of Mr. Sidney's domestic arrangements, plus a clarion call to 'shock civilisation into common-sense.'

'And you'll come to tea with me to-morrow?' she asked, after lunch, nibbling cashew nuts from a saucer. Midmore replied that there were great arrears of work to overtake when a man had been put away for so long.

'But you've come back like a giant refreshed. . . . I hope that Daphne'—this was the lady of the twelve and the eight-page letter—'will be with us too. She has misunderstood herself, like so many of us,' the woman murmured, 'but I think eventually . . .' she flung out her thin little hands. 'However, these are things that each lonely soul must adjust for itself.'

'Indeed, yes,' said Midmore with a deep sigh. The old tricks were sprouting in the old atmosphere like mushrooms in a dung-pit. He passed into an abrupt reverie, shook his head, as though stung by tumultuous memories, and departed without any ceremony of farewell to—catch a mid-afternoon express where a man meets associates who talk horse, and weather as it affects the horse, all the way down. What worried him most was that he had missed a day with the hounds.

He met Rhoda's keen old eyes without flinching; and the drawing-room looked very comfortable that wet evening at tea. After all, his visit to town had not been wholly a failure. He had burned quite a bushel of letters at his flat. A flat—here he reached mechanically towards the worn volumes near the sofa—a flat was a consuming animal. As for Daphne . . . he opened at random on the words: 'His lordship then did as desired and disclosed a *tableau* of considerable strength and variety.' Midmore reflected: 'And I used to think . . . But she wasn't . . . We were all babblers and skirters together . . . I didn't babble much—thank goodness—but I skirted.' He turned the pages backward for more *Sortes Surteesianae*, and read: 'When at length they rose to go to bed it struck each man as he followed his neighbour upstairs, that the man before him walked very crookedly.' He laughed aloud at the fire.

'What about to-morrow?' Rhoda asked, entering with garments over her shoulder. 'It's never stopped raining since you left. You'll be plastered out of sight an' all in five minutes. You'd better wear your next best, 'adn't you? I'm afraid they've shrank. 'Adn't you best try 'em on?'

'Here?' said Midmore.

''Suit yourself. I bathed you when you wasn't larger than a leg o' lamb,' said the ex-ladies'-maid.

'Rhoda, one of these days I shall get a valet, and a married butler.'

'There's many a true word spoke in jest. But nobody's huntin' to-morrow.'

'Why? Have they cancelled the meet?'

'They say it only means slipping and over-reaching in the mud, and they all 'ad enough of that to-day. Charlie told me so just now.'

'Oh!' It seemed that the word of Mr. Sperrit's confidential clerk had weight.

'Charlie came down to help Mr. Sidney lift the gates,' Rhoda continued.

'The floodgates? They are perfectly easy to handle now. I've put in a wheel and a winch.'

'When the brook's really up they must be took clean out on account of the rubbish blockin' 'em. That's why Charlie came down.'

Midmore grunted impatiently. 'Everybody has talked to me about that brook ever since I came here. It's never done anything yet.'

'This 'as been a dry summer. If you care to look now, sir, I'll get you a lantern.'

She paddled out with him into a large wet night. Half-way down the lawn her light was reflected on shallow brown water, pricked through with grass blades at the edges. Beyond that light, the brook was strangling and kicking among hedges and tree-trunks.

'What on earth will happen to the big rose-bed?' was Midmore's first word.

'It generally 'as to be restocked after a flood. Ah!'

she raised her lantern. 'There's two garden-seats knockin' against the sun-dial. Now, that won't do the roses any good.'

'This is too absurd. There ought to be some decently thought-out system—for—for dealing with this sort of thing.' He peered into the rushing gloom. There seemed to be no end to the moisture and the racket. In town he had noticed nothing.

'It can't he 'elped,' said Rhoda. 'It's just what it does do once in just so often. We'd better go back.'

All earth under foot was sliding in a thousand liquid noises towards the hoarse brook. Somebody wailed from the house: ''Fraid o' the water! Come 'ere! 'Fraid o' the water!'

'That's Jimmy. Wet always takes 'im that way,' she explained. The idiot charged into them, shaking with terror.

'Brave Jimmy! How brave of Jimmy! Come into the hall. What Jimmy got now?' she crooned. It was a sodden note which ran: 'Dear Rhoda—Mr. Lotten, with whom I rode home this afternoon, told me that if this wet keeps up, he's afraid the fish-pond he built last year, where Coxen's old mill-dam was, will go, as the dam did once before, he says. If it does it's bound to come down the brook. It may be all right, but perhaps you had better look out. C. S.'

'If Coxen's dam goes, that means . . . I'll 'ave the drawing-room carpet up at once to be on the safe side. The claw-'ammer is in the libery.'

'Wait a minute. Sidney's gates are out, you said?'

'Both. He'll need it if Coxen's pond goes. . . . I've seen it once.'

'I'll just slip down and have a look at Sidney. Light the lantern again, please, Rhoda.'

'You won't get *him* to stir. He's been there since he was born. But *she* don't know anything. I'll fetch your waterproof and some top-boots.'

''Fraid o' the water! 'Fraid o' the water!' Jimmy sobbed, pressed against a corner of the hall, his hands to his eyes.

'All right, Jimmy. Jimmy can help play with the carpet,' Rhoda answered, as Midmore went forth into the darkness and the roarings all round. He had never seen such an utterly unregulated state of affairs. There was another lantern reflected on the streaming drive.

'Hi! Rhoda! Did you get my note? I came down to make sure. I thought, afterwards, Jimmy might funk the water!'

'It's me—Miss Sperrit,' Midmore cried. 'Yes, we got it, thanks.'

'You're back, then. Oh, good! . . . Is it bad down with you?'

'I'm going to Sidney's to have a look.'

'You won't get *him* out. 'Lucky I met Bob Lotten. I told him he hadn't any business impounding water for his idiotic trout without rebuilding the dam.'

'How far up is it? I've only been there once.'

'Not more than four miles as the water will come. He says he's opened all the sluices.'

She had turned and fallen into step beside him, her hooded head bowed against the thinning rain. As usual she was humming to herself.

'Why on earth did you come out in this weather?' Midmore asked.

'It was worse when you were in town. The rain's

taking off now. If it wasn't for that pond, I wouldn't worry so much. There's Sidney's bell. Come on!' She broke into a run. A cracked bell was jangling feebly down the valley.

'Keep on the road!' Midmore shouted. The ditches were snorting bank-full on either side, and towards the brook-side the fields were afloat and beginning to move in the darkness.

'Catch me going off it! There's his light burning all right.' She halted undistressed at a little rise. 'But the flood's in the orchard. Look!' She swung her lantern to show a front rank of old apple-trees reflected in still, out-lying waters beyond the half-drowned hedge. They could hear above the thud-thud of the gorged floodgates, shrieks in two keys as monotonous as a steam-organ.

'The high one's the pig.' Miss Sperrit laughed.

'All right! I'll get *her* out. You stay where you are, and I'll see you home afterwards.'

'But the water's only just over the road,' she objected.

'Never mind. Don't you move. Promise?'

'All right. You take my stick, then, and feel for holes in case anything's washed out anywhere. This *is* a lark!'

Midmore took it, and stepped into the water that moved sluggishly as yet across the farm road which ran to Sidney's front door from the raised and metalled public road. It was half way up to his knees when he knocked. As he looked back Miss Sperrit's lantern seemed to float in mid-ocean.

'You can't come in or the water'll come with you. I've bunged up all the cracks,' Mr. Sidney shouted from within. 'Who be ye?'

'Take me out! Take me out!' the woman shrieked, and the pig from his sty behind the house urgently seconded the motion.

'I'm Midmore! Coxen's old mill-dam is likely to go, they say. Come out!'

'I told 'em it would when they made a fish-pond of it. 'Twasn't ever puddled proper. But it's a middlin' wide valley. She's got room to spread. . . . Keep still, or I'll take and duck you in the cellar! . . . You go 'ome, Mus' Midmore, an' take the law o' Mus' Lotten soon's you've changed your socks.'

'Confound you, aren't you coming out?'

'To catch my death o' cold? I'm all right where I be. I've seen it before. But you can take *her*. She's no sort o' use or sense. . . . Climb out through the window. Didn't I tell you I'd plugged the door-cracks, you fool's daughter?' The parlour window opened, and the woman flung herself into Midmore's arms, nearly knocking him down. Mr. Sidney leaned out of the window, pipe in mouth.

'Take her 'ome,' he said, and added oracularly:

'Two women in one house,
Two cats an' one mouse,
Two dogs an' one bone—
Which I will leave alone.

I've seen it before.' Then he shut and fastened the window.

'A trap! A trap! You had ought to have brought a trap for me. I'll be drowned in this wet,' the woman cried.

'Hold up! You can't be any wetter than you are.

Come along!' Midmore did not at all like the feel of the water over his boot-tops.

'Hooray! Come along!' Miss Sperrit's lantern, not fifty yards away, waved cheerily.

The woman threshed towards it like a panic-stricken goose, fell on her knees, was jerked up again by Midmore, and pushed on till she collapsed at Miss Sperrit's feet.

'But you won't get bronchitis if you go straight to Mr. Midmore's house,' said the unsympathetic maiden.

'O Gawd! O Gawd! I wish our 'eavenly Father 'ud forgive me my sins an' call me 'ome,' the woman sobbed. 'But I won't go to '*is* 'ouse! I won't.'

'All right, then. Stay here. Now, if we run,' Miss Sperrit whispered to Midmore, 'she'll follow us. Not too fast!'

They set off at a considerate trot, and the woman lumbered behind them, bellowing, till they met a third lantern—Rhoda holding Jimmy's hand. She had got the carpet up, she said, and was escorting Jimmy past the water that he dreaded.

'That's all right,' Miss Sperrit pronounced. 'Take Mrs. Sidney back with you, Rhoda, and put her to bed. I'll take Jimmy with me. You aren't afraid of the water now, are you, Jimmy?'

'Not afraid of anything now.' Jimmy reached for her hand. 'But get away from the water quick.'

'I'm coming with you,' Midmore interrupted.

'You most certainly are not. You're drenched. She threw you twice. Go home and change. You may have to be out again all night. It's only half-past seven now. I'm perfectly safe.' She flung herself

lightly over a stile, and hurried uphill by the footpath, out of reach of all but the boasts of the flood below.

Rhoda, dead silent, herded Mrs. Sidney to the house.

'You'll find your things laid out on the bed,' she said to Midmore as he came up. 'I'll attend to—to this. *She's* got nothing to cry for.'

Midmore raced into dry kit, and raced uphill to be rewarded by the sight of the lantern just turning into the Sperrits' gate. He came back by way of Sidney's farm, where he saw the light twinkling across three acres of shining water, for the rain had ceased and the clouds were stripping overhead, though the brook was noisier than ever. Now there was only that doubtful mill-pond to look after—that and his swirling world abandoned to himself alone.

'We shall have to sit up for it,' said Rhoda after dinner. And as the drawing-room commanded the best view of the rising flood, they watched it from there for a long time, while all the clocks of the house bore them company.

''Tisn't the water, it's the mud on the skirting-board after it goes down that I mind,' Rhoda whispered. 'The last time Coxen's mill broke, I remember it came up to the second—no, third—step o' Mr. Sidney's stairs.'

'What did Sidney do about it?'

'He made a notch on the step. 'E said it was a record. Just like 'im.'

'It's up to the drive now,' said Midmore after another long wait. 'And the rain stopped before eight, you know.'

''Then Coxen's dam *'as* broke, and that's the first of the flood-water.' She stared out beside him. The water was rising in sudden pulses—an inch or two at a

time, with great sweeps and lagoons and a sudden increase of the brook's proper thunder.

'You can't stand all the time. Take a chair,' Midmore said presently.

Rhoda looked back into the bare room. 'The carpet bein' up *does* make a difference. Thank you, sir, I *will* 'ave a set-down.'

''Right over the drive now,' said Midmore. He opened the window and leaned out. 'Is that wind up the valley, Rhoda?'

'No, that's *it!* But I've seen it before.'

There was not so much a roar as the purposeful drive of a tide across a jagged reef, which put down every other sound for twenty minutes. A wide sheet of water hurried up to the little terrace on which the house stood, pushed round either corner, rose again and stretched, as it were, yawning beneath the moonlight, joined other sheets waiting for them in unsuspected hollows, and lay out all in one. A puff of wind followed.

'It's right up to the wall now. I can touch it with my finger.' Midmore bent over the window-sill.

'I can 'ear it in the cellars,' said Rhoda dolefully. 'Well, we've done what we can! I think I'll 'ave a look.' She left the room and was absent half an hour or more, during which time he saw a full-grown tree hauling itself across the lawn by its naked roots. Then a hurdle knocked against the wall, caught on an iron foot-scraper just outside, and made a square-headed ripple. The cascade through the cellar-windows diminished.

'It's dropping,' Rhoda cried, as she returned. 'It's only tricklin' into my cellars now.'

'Wait a minute. I believe—I believe I can see the scraper on the edge of the drive just showing!'

In another ten minutes the drive itself roughened and became gravel again, tilting all its water towards the shrubbery.

'The pond's gone past,' Rhoda announced. 'We shall only 'ave the common flood to contend with now. You'd better go to bed.'

'I ought to go down and have another look at Sidney before daylight.'

'No need. You can see 'is light burnin' from all the upstairs windows.'

'By the way. I forgot about *her*. Where've you put her?'

'In my bed.' Rhoda's tone was ice. 'I wasn't going to undo a room for *that* stuff.'

'But it—it couldn't be helped,' said Midmore. 'She was half drowned. One mustn't be narrow-minded, Rhoda, even if her position isn't quite—er—regular.'

'Pfff! I wasn't worryin' about that.' She leaned forward to the window. 'There's the edge of the lawn showin' now. It falls as fast as it rises. Dearie'—the change of tone made Midmore jump—'didn't you know that I was 'is first? *That's* what makes it so hard to bear.' Midmore looked at the long lizard-like back and had no words.

She went on, still talking through the black window-pane:

'Your pore dear auntie was very kind about it. She said she'd make all allowances for one, but no more. Never any more. . . . Then, you didn't know 'oo Charlie was all this time?'

'Your nephew, I always thought.'

'Well, well,' she spoke pityingly. 'Everybody's business being nobody's business, I suppose no one thought to tell you. But Charlie made 'is own way for 'imself from the beginnin'! . . . But *her* upstairs, she never produced anything. Just an 'ousekeeper, as you might say. 'Turned over an' went to sleep straight off. She 'ad the impudence to ask me for 'ot sherry-gruel.'

'Did you give it to her,' said Midmore.

'Me? Your sherry? No!'

The memory of Sidney's outrageous rhyme at the window, and Charlie's long nose (he thought it looked interested at the time) as he passed the copies of Mrs. Werf's last four wills, overcame Midmore without warning.

'This damp is givin' you a cold,' said Rhoda, rising. 'There you go again! Sneezin's a sure sign of it. Better go to bed. You can't do anythin' excep''—she stood rigid, with crossed arms—'about me.'

'Well. What about you?' Midmore stuffed the handkerchief into his pocket.

'Now you know about it, what are you goin' to do—sir?'

She had the answer on her lean cheek before the sentence was finished.

'Go and see if you can get us something to eat, Rhoda. And beer.'

'I expec' the larder 'll be in a swim,' she replied, 'but old bottled stuff don't take any harm from wet.' She returned with a tray, all in order, and they ate and drank together, and took observations of the falling flood till dawn opened its bleared eyes on the wreck of what had

been a fair garden. Midmore, cold and annoyed, found himself humming:

> 'That flood strewed wrecks upon the grass,
> That ebb swept out the flocks to sea.

There isn't a rose left, Rhoda!

> An awesome ebb and flow it was
> To many more than mine and me.
> But each will mourn his . . .

It'll cost me a hundred.'

'Now we know the worst,' said Rhoda, 'we can go to bed. I'll lay on the kitchen sofa. His light's burnin' still.'

'And *she ?*'

'Dirty old cat! You ought to 'ear 'er snore!'

At ten o'clock in the morning, after a maddening hour in his own garden on the edge of the retreating brook, Midmore went off to confront more damage at Sidney's. The first thing that met him was the pig, snowy white, for the water had washed him out of his new sty, calling on high heaven for breakfast. The front door had been forced open, and the flood had registered its own height in a brown dado on the walls. Midmore chased the pig out and called up the stairs.

'I be abed o' course. Which step 'as she rose to?' Sidney cried from above. 'The fourth? Then it's beat all records. Come up.'

'Are you ill?' Midmore asked as he entered the room. The red eyelids blinked cheerfully. Mr. Sidney, beneath a sumptuous patch-work quilt, was smoking.

'Nah! I'm only thankin' God I ain't my own landlord. Take that cheer. What's she done?'

'It hasn't gone down enough for me to make sure.'

'Them floodgates o' yourn'll be middlin' far down the brook by now; an' your rose-garden have gone after 'em. I saved my chickens, though. You'd better get Mus' Sperrit to take the law o' Lotten an' 'is fish-pond.'

'No, thanks. I've trouble enough without that.'

'Hev ye?' Mr. Sidney grinned. 'How did ye make out with those two women o' mine last night? I lay they fought.'

'You infernal old scoundrel!' Midmore laughed.

'I be—an' then again I bain't,' was the placid answer. 'But, Rhoda, *she* wouldn't ha' left me last night. Fire or flood, she wouldn't.'

'Why didn't you ever marry her?' Midmore asked.

'Waste of good money. She was willin' without.'

There was a step on the gritty mud below, and a voice humming. Midmore rose quickly saying: 'Well, I suppose you're all right now.'

'I be. I ain't a landlord, nor I ain't young—nor anxious. Oh, Mus' Midmore! Would it make any odds about her thirty pounds comin' regular if I married her? Charlie said maybe 'twould.'

'Did he?' Midmore turned at the door. 'And what did Jimmy say about it?'

'Jimmy?' Mr. Sidney chuckled as the joke took him. 'Oh, *he's* none o' mine. He's Charlie's look-out.'

Midmore slammed the door and ran downstairs.

'Well, this is a—sweet—mess,' said Miss Sperrit in shortest skirts and heaviest riding-boots. 'I had to come down and have a look at it. "The old mayor

climbed the belfry tower." 'Been up all night nursing your family?'

'Nearly that! Isn't it cheerful?' He pointed through the door to the stairs with small twig-drift on the last three treads.

'It's a record, though,' said she, and hummed to herself:

'That flood strewed wrecks upon the grass,
That ebb swept out the flocks to sea.'

'You're always singing that, aren't you?' Midmore said suddenly as she passed into the parlour where slimy chairs had been stranded at all angles.

'Am I? Now I come to think of it I believe I do. They say I always hum when I ride. Have you noticed it?'

'Of course I have. I notice every——'

'Oh,' she went on hurriedly. 'We had it for the village cantata last winter—"The Brides of Enderby."'

'No! "High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire."' For some reason Midmore spoke sharply.

'Just like that.' She pointed to the befouled walls. 'I say. . . . Let's get this furniture a little straight . . . You know it too?'

'Every word, since you sang it, of course.'

'When?'

'The first night I ever came down. You rode past the drawing-room window in the dark singing it—"And sweeter woman——"'

'I thought the house was empty then. Your aunt always let us use that short cut. Ha-hadn't we better get this out into the passage? It'll all have to come out

anyhow. You take the other side.' They began to lift a heavyish table. Their words came jerkily between gasps and their faces were as white as—a newly washed and very hungry pig.

'Look out!' Midmore shouted. His legs were whirled from under him, as the table, grunting madly, careened and knocked the girl out of sight.

The wild boar of Asia could not have cut down a couple more scientifically, but this little pig lacked his ancestor's nerve and fled shrieking over their bodies.

'Are you hurt, darling?' was Midmore's first word, and 'No—I'm only winded—dear,' was Miss Sperrit's, as he lifted her out of her corner, her hat over one eye and her right cheek a smear of mud.

. . . . . .

They fed him a little later on some chicken-feed that they found in Sidney's quiet barn, a pail of buttermilk out of the dairy, and a quantity of onions from a shelf in the back-kitchen.

'Seed-onions, most likely,' said Connie. 'You'll hear about this.'

'What does it matter? They ought to have been gilded. We must buy him.'

'And keep him as long as he lives,' she agreed. 'But I think I ought to go home now. You see, when I came out I didn't expect . . . Did you?'

'No! Yes. . . . It had to come. . . . But if any one had told me an hour ago! . . . Sidney's unspeakable parlour—and the mud on the carpet.'

'Oh, I say! Is my cheek clean now?'

'Not quite. Lend me your hanky again a minute, darling. . . . What a purler you came!'

'You can't talk. 'Remember when your chin hit that table and you said "blast"! I was just going to laugh.'

'You didn't laugh when I picked you up. You were going "oo-oo-oo" like a little owl.'

'My dear child——'

'Say that again!'

'My dear child. (Do you really like it? I keep it for my best friends.) My *dee-ar* child, I thought I was going to be sick there and then. He knocked every ounce of wind out of me—the angel! But I must really go.'

They set off together, very careful not to join hands or take arms.

'Not across the fields,' said Midmore at the stile. 'Come round by—by your own place.'

She flushed indignantly.

'It will be yours in a little time,' he went on, shaken with his own audacity.

'Not so much of your little times, if you please!' She shied like a colt across the road; then instantly, like a colt, her eyes lit with new curiosity as she came in sight of the drive-gates.

'And not quite so much of your airs and graces, Madam,' Midmore returned, 'or I won't let you use our drive as a short cut any more.'

'Oh, I'll be good. I'll be good.' Her voice changed suddenly. 'I swear I'll try to be good, dear. I'm not much of a thing at the best. What made *you* . . .'

'I'm worse—worse! Miles and oceans worse. But what does it matter now?'

They halted beside the gate-pillars.

'I see!' she said, looking up the sodden carriage sweep

to the front door porch where Rhoda was slapping a wet mat to and fro. '*I* see. . . . Now, I really must go home. No! Don't you come. I must speak to Mother first all by myself.'

He watched her up the hill till she was out of sight.

THE FLOODS

The rain it rains without a stay
  In the hills above us, in the hills;
And presently the floods break way
  Whose strength is in the hills.
The trees they suck from every cloud,
The valley brooks they roar aloud—
Bank-high for the lowlands, lowlands,
  Lowlands under the hills!

The first wood down is sere and small,
  From the hills, the brishings off the hills;
And then come by the bats and all
  We cut last year in the hills;
And then the roots we tried to cleave
But found too tough and had to leave—
Polting through the lowlands, lowlands,
  Lowlands under the hills!

The eye shall look, the ear shall hark
  To the hills, the doings in the hills,
And rivers mating in the dark
  With tokens from the hills.
Now what is weak will surely go,
And what is strong must prove it so.
Stand fast in the lowlands, lowlands,
  Lowlands under the hills!

The floods they shall not be afraid—
  Nor the hills above 'em, nor the hills—
Of any fence which man has made
  Betwixt him and the hills.
The waters shall not reckon twice
For any work of man's device,
But bid it down to the lowlands, lowlands,
  Lowlands under the hills!

The floods shall sweep corruption clean—
  By the hills, the blessing of the hills—
That more the meadows may be green
  New-mended from the hills.
The crops and cattle shall increase,
Nor little children shall not cease—
Go—plough the lowlands, lowlands,
  Lowlands under the hills!

THE FABULISTS

When all the world would have a matter hid,
  Since Truth is seldom friend to any crowd,
Men write in fable, as old Æsop did,
  Jesting at that which none will name aloud.
And this they needs must do, or it will fall
Unless they please they are not heard at all.

When desperate Folly daily laboureth
  To work confusion upon all we have,
When diligent Sloth demandeth Freedom's death,
  And banded Fear commandeth Honour's grave—
Even in that certain hour before the fall
Unless men please they are not heard at all.

Needs must all please, yet some not all for need
  Needs must all toil, yet some not all for gain,
But that men taking pleasure may take heed,
  Whom present toil shall snatch from later pain.
Thus some have toiled but their reward was small
Since, though they pleased, they were not heard at all.

This was the lock that lay upon our lips,
  This was the yoke that we have undergone,
Denying us all pleasant fellowships
  As in our time and generation.
Our pleasures unpursued age past recall.
And for our pains—we are not heard at all.

What man hears aught except the groaning guns?
What man heeds aught save what each instant brings?
When each man's life all imaged life outruns,
What man shall pleasure in imaginings?
So it hath fallen, as it was bound to fall,
We are not, nor we were not, heard at all.

THE VORTEX

(August, 1914)

'Thy Lord spoke by inspiration to the Bee.'
AL KORAN.

I HAVE, to my grief and loss, suppressed several notable stories of my friend, the Hon. A. M. Penfentenyou,[1] once Minister of Woods and Waysides in De Thouar's first administration; later, Premier in all but name of one of Our great and growing Dominions; and now, as always, the idol of his own Province, which is two and one-half the size of England.

For this reason I hold myself at liberty to deal with some portion of the truth concerning Penfentenyou's latest visit to Our shores. He arrived at my house by car, on a hot summer day, in a white waistcoat and spats, sweeping black frock-coat and glistening top-hat—a little rounded, perhaps, at the edges, but agile as ever in mind and body.

'What is the trouble now?' I asked, for the last time we had met, Penfentenyou was floating a three-million pound loan for his beloved but unscrupulous Province, and I did not wish to entertain any more of his financial friends.

[1]See 'The Puzzler,' *Actions and Reactions.*

'We,' Penfentenyou replied ambassadorially, 'have come to have a Voice in Your Councils. By the way, the Voice is coming down on the evening train with my Agent-General. I thought you wouldn't mind if I invited 'em. You know We're going to share Your burdens henceforward. You'd better get into training.'

'Certainly,' I replied. 'What's the Voice like?'

'He's in earnest,' said Penfentenyou. 'He's got It, and he's got It bad. He'll give It to you,' he said.

'What's his name?'

'We call him all sorts of names, but I think you'd better call him Mr. Lingnam. You won't have to do it more than once.'

'What's he suffering from?'

'The Empire. He's pretty nearly cured us all of Imperialism at home. P'raps he'll cure you.'

'Very good. What am I to do with him?'

'Don't you worry,' said Penfentenyou. 'He'll do it.'

And when Mr. Lingnam appeared half-an-hour later with the Agent-General for Penfentenyou's Dominion, he did just that.

He advanced across the lawn eloquent as all the tides. He said he had been observing to the Agent-General that it was both politically immoral and strategically unsound that forty-four million people should bear the entire weight of the defences of Our mighty Empire, but, as he had observed (here the Agent-General evaporated), we stood now upon the threshold of a new era in which the self-governing *and* self-respecting (bis) Dominions would rightly and righteously, as co-partners in Empery, shoulder their share of any burden which the Pan-Imperial Council of the Future should allot. The Agent-General was already arranging for drinks

with Penfentenyou at the other end of the garden. Mr. Lingnam swept me on to the most remote bench and settled to his theme.

We dined at eight. At nine Mr. Lingnam was only drawing abreast of things Imperial. At ten the Agent-General, who earns his salary, was shamelessly dozing on the sofa. At eleven he and Penfentenyou went to bed. At midnight Mr. Lingnam brought down his big-bellied despatch box with the newspaper clippings and set to federating the Empire in earnest. I remember that he had three alternative plans. As a dealer in words, I plumped for the resonant third—'Reciprocally co-ordinated Senatorial Hegemony'—which he then elaborated in detail for three-quarters of an hour. At half-past one he urged me to have faith and to remember that nothing mattered except the Idea. Then he retired to his room, accompanied by one glass of cold water, and I went into the dawn-lit garden and prayed to any Power that might be off duty for the blood of Mr. Lingnam, Penfentenyou, and the Agent-General.

To me, as I have often observed elsewhere, the hour of earliest dawn is fortunate, and the wind that runs before it has ever been my most comfortable counsellor.

'Wait!' it said, all among the night's expectant rose-buds. 'To-morrow is also a day. Wait upon the Event!'

I went to bed so at peace with God and Man and Guest that when I waked I visited Mr. Lingnam in pyjamas, and he talked to me Pan-Imperially for half-an-hour before his bath. Later, the Agent-General said he had letters to write, and Penfentenyou invented a Cabinet crisis in his adored Dominion which would keep

him busy with codes and cables all the forenoon. But I said firmly, 'Mr. Lingnam wishes to see a little of the country round here. You are coming with us in your own car.'

'It's a hired one,' Penfentenyou objected.

'Yes. Paid for by me as a taxpayer,' I replied.

'And yours has a top, and the weather looks thundery,' said the Agent-General. 'Ours hasn't a windscreen. Even our goggles were hired.'

'I'll lend you goggles,' I said. 'My car is under repairs.'

The hireling who had looked to be returned to London spat and growled on the drive. She was an open car, capable of some eighteen miles on the flat, with tetanic gears and a perpetual palsy.

'It won't make the least difference,' sighed the Agent-General. 'He'll only raise his voice. He did it all the way coming down.'

'I say,' said Penfentenyou suspiciously, 'what are you doing all this *for ?*'

'Love of the Empire,' I answered, as Mr. Lingnam tripped up in dust-coat and binoculars. 'Now, Mr. Lingnam will tell us exactly what he wants to see. He probably knows more about England than the rest of us put together.'

'I read it up yesterday,' said Mr. Lingnam simply. While we stowed the lunch-basket (one can never make too sure with a hired car) he outlined a very pretty and instructive little day's run.

'You'll drive, of course?' said Penfentenyou to him. 'It's the only thing you know anything about.'

This astonished me, for your greater Federationists are rarely mechanicians, but Mr. Lingnam said he would

prefer to be inside for the present and enjoy our conversation.

Well settled on the back seat, he did not once lift his eyes to the mellow landscape around him, or throw a word at the life of the English road which to me is one renewed and unreasoned orgy of delight. The mustard-coloured scouts of the Automobile Association; their natural enemies, the unjust police; our natural enemies, the deliberate market-day cattle, broadside-on at all corners, the bicycling butcher-boy a furlong behind; road-engines that pulled giddy-go-rounds, rifle galleries, and swings, and sucked snortingly from wayside ponds in defiance of the notice-board; traction-engines, their trailers piled high with road metal; uniformed village nurses, one per seven statute miles, flitting by on their wheels; governess-carts full of pink children jogging unconcernedly past roaring, brazen touring-cars; the wayside rector with virgins in attendance, their facesscrewed up against our dust; motor-bicycles of every shape charging down at every angle; red flags of rifle-ranges; detachments of dusty-puttied Territorials; coveys of flagrant children playing in mid-street, and the wise, educated English dog safe and quite silent on the pavement if his fool-mistress would but cease from trying to save him, passed and repassed us in sunlit or shaded settings. But Mr. Lingnam only talked. He talked—we all sat together behind so that we could not escape him—and he talked above the worn gears and a certain maddening swish of one badly patched tire—*and* he talked of the Federation of the Empire against all conceivable dangers except himself. Yet I was neither brutally rude like Penfentenyou, nor swooningly bored like the Agent-General. I remembered a certain Joseph

Finsbury who delighted the Tregonwell Arms on the borders of the New Forest with 'nine'—it should have been ten—'versions of a single income of two hundred pounds' placing the imaginary person in—but I could not recall the list of towns further than 'London, Paris, Bagdad, and Spitzbergen.' This last I must have murmured aloud, for the Agent-General suddenly became human and went on: Bussorah, Heligoland, and the Scilly Islands——'

'What?' growled Penfentenyou.

'Nothing,' said the Agent-General, squeezing my hand affectionately. 'Only we have just found out that we are brothers.'

'Exactly,' said Mr. Lingnam. 'That's what I've been trying to lead up to. We're *all* brothers. D'you realise that fifteen years ago such a conversation as we're having would have been unthinkable? The Empire wouldn't have been ripe for it. To go back, even ten years——'

'I've got it,' cried the Agent-General. '"Brighton, Cincinnati, and Nijni-Novgorod!" God bless R. L. S.! Go on, Uncle Joseph. I can endure much now.'

Mr. Lingnam went on like our shandrydan, slowly and loudly. He admitted that a man obsessed with a Central Idea—and, after all, the only thing that mattered was the Idea—might become a bore, but the World's Work, he pointed out, had been done by bores. So he laid his bones down to that work till we abandoned ourselves to the passage of time and the Mercy of Allah, Who Alone closes the Mouths of His Prophets. And we wasted more than fifty miles of summer's vivid own England upon him the while.

About two o'clock we topped Sumtner Rising and

looked down on the village of Sumtner Barton, which lies just across a single railway line, spanned by a red brick bridge. The thick, thunderous June airs brought us gusts of melody from a giddy-go-round steam-organ in full blast near the pond on the village green. Drums, too, thumped and banners waved and regalia flashed at the far end of the broad village street. Mr. Lingnam asked why.

'Nothing Imperial, I'm afraid. It looks like a Foresters' Fête—one of our big Mutual Benefit Societies,' I explained.

'The Idea only needs to be co-ordinated to Imperial scale——' he began.

'But it means that the pub. will be crowded,' I went on.

'What's the matter with lunching by the roadside here?' said Penfentenyou. 'We've got the lunch-basket.'

'Haven't you ever heard of Sumtner Barton ales?' I demanded, and he became the administrator at once, saying, '*I* see! Lingnam can drive us in and we'll get some, while Holford'—this was the hireling chauffeur, whose views on beer we knew not—'lays out lunch here. That'll be better than eating at the pub. We can take in the Foresters' Fête as well, and perhaps I can buy some newspapers at the station.'

'True,' I answered. 'The railway station is just under that bridge, and we'll come back and lunch here.'

I indicated a terrace of cool clean shade beneath kindly beeches at the head of Sumtner Rise. As Holford got out the lunch-basket, a detachment of Regular troops on manœuvres swung down the baking road.

'Ah!' said Mr. Lingnam, the monthly-magazine roll in his voice. 'All Europe is an armed camp, groaning,

as I remember I once wrote, under the weight of its accoutrements.'

'Oh, hop in and drive,' cried Penfentenyou. 'We want that beer!'

It made no difference. Mr. Lingnam could have federated the Empire from a tight rope. He continued his oration at the wheel as we trundled.

'The danger to the Younger Nations is of being drawn into this vortex of Militarism,' he went on, dodging the rear of the soldiery.

'Slow past troops,' I hinted. 'It saves 'em dust. And we overtake on the right as a rule in England.'

'Thanks!' Mr. Lingnam slued over. 'That's another detail which needs to be co-ordinated throughout the Empire. But to go back to what I was saying. My idea has always been that the component parts of the Empire should take counsel among themselves on the approach of war, so that, after we have decided on the merits of the *casus belli*, we can co-ordinate what part each Dominion shall play whenever war is, unfortunately, a possibility.'

We neared the hog-back railway bridge, and the hireling knocked piteously at the grade. Mr. Lingnam changed gears, and she hoisted herself up to a joyous *Youp-i-addy-i-ay !* from the steam-organ. As we topped the arch we saw a Foresters' band with banners marching down the street.

'That's all very fine,' said the Agent-General, 'but in real life things have a knack of happening without approaching——'

(Some schools of Thought hold that Time is not; and that when we attain complete enlightenment we shall

behold past, present, and future as One Awful Whole. I myself have nearly achieved this.)

We dipped over the bridge into the village. A boy on a bicycle, loaded with four paper bonnet-boxes, pedalled towards us, out of an alley on our right. He bowed his head the better to overcome the ascent, and naturally took his left. Mr. Lingnam swerved frantically to the right. Penfentenyou shouted. The boy looked up, saw the car was like to squeeze him against the bridge wall, flung himself off his machine and across the narrow pavement into the nearest house. He slammed the door at the precise moment when the car, all brakes set, bunted the abandoned bicycle, shattering three of the bonnet-boxes and jerking the fourth over the unscreened dashboard into Mr. Lingnam's arms.

There was a dead stillness, then a hiss like that of escaping steam, and a man who had been running towards us ran the other way.

'Why! I think that those must be bees,' said Mr. Lingnam.

They were—four full swarms—and the first living objects which he had remarked upon all day.

Some one said, 'Oh, God!' The Agent-General went out over the back of the car, crying resolutely: 'Stop the traffic! Stop the traffic, there!' Penfentenyou was already on the pavement ringing a door-bell, so I had both their rugs, which—for I am an apiarist—I threw over my head. While I was tucking my trousers into my socks—for I am an apiarist of experience—Mr. Lingnam picked up the unexploded bonnet-box and with a single magnificent gesture (he told us afterwards he thought there was a river beneath) hurled it over the

parapet of the bridge, ere he ran across the road towards the village green. Now, the station platform immediately below was crowded with Foresters and their friends waiting to welcome a delegation from a sister Court. I saw the box burst on the flint edging of the station garden and the contents sweep forward conewise like shrapnel. But the result was stimulating rather than sedative. All those well-dressed people below shouted like Sodom and Gomorrah. Then they moved as a unit into the booking-office, the waiting-rooms, and other places, shut doors and windows and declaimed aloud, while the incoming train whistled far down the line.

I pivoted round cross-legged on the back seat, like a Circassian beauty beneath her veil, and saw Penfentenyou, his coat-collar over his ears, dancing before a shut door and holding up handfuls of currency to a silver-haired woman at an upper window, who only mouthed and shook her head. A little child, carrying a kitten, came smiling round a corner. Suddenly (but these things moved me no more than so many yards of three-penny cinematograph-film) the kitten leaped spitting from her arms, the child burst into tears, Penfentenyou, still dancing, snatched her up and tucked her under his coat, the woman's countenance blanched, the front door opened, Penfentenyou and the child pressed through, and I was alone in an inhospitable world where every one was shutting windows and calling children home.

A voice cried: 'You've frowtened 'em! You've frowtened 'em! Throw dust on 'em and they'll settle!'

I did not desire to throw dust on any created thing. I needed both hands for my draperies and two more for my stockings. Besides, the bees were doing me no

hurt. They recognised me as a member of the County Bee-keepers' Association who had paid his annual subscription and was entitled to a free seat at all apicultural exhibitions. The quiver and the churn of the hireling car, or it might have been the lurching banners and the arrogant big drum, inclined many of them to go up street, and pay court to the advancing Foresters' band. So they went, such as had not followed Mr. Lingnam in his flight towards the green, and I looked out of two goggled eyes instead of half a one at the approaching musicians, while I listened with both ears to the delayed train's second whistle down the line beneath me.

The Forester's band no more knew what was coming than do troops under sudden fire. Indeed, there were the same extravagant gestures and contortions as attend wounds and deaths in war; the very same uncanny cessations of speech—for the trombone was cut off at mid-slide, even as a man drops with a syllable on his tongue. They clawed, they slapped, they fled, leaving behind them a trophy of banners and brasses crudely arranged round the big drum. Then that end of the street also shut its windows, and the village, stripped of life, lay round me like a reef at low tide. Though I am, as I have said, an apiarist in good standing, I never realised that there were so many bees in the world. When they had woven a flashing haze from one end of the desert street to the other, there remained reserves enough to form knops and pendules on all window-sills and gutter-ends, without diminishing the multitudes in the three oozing bonnet-boxes, or drawing on the Fourth (Railway) Battalion in charge of the station below. The prisoners in the waiting-rooms and other places there cried out a great deal (I argued that they were dying of

the heat), and at regular intervals the stationmaster called and called to a signalman who was not on duty, and the train whistled as it drew nearer.

Then Penfentenyou, venal and adaptable politician of the type that survives at the price of all the higher emotions, appeared at the window of the house on my right, broken and congested with mirth, the woman beside him, and the child in his arms. I saw his mouth open and shut, he hollowed his hands round it, but the churr of the motor and the bees drowned his words. He pointed dramatically across the street many times and fell back, tears running down his face. I turned like a hooded barbette in a heavy seaway (not knowing when my trousers would come out of my socks again) through one hundred and eighty degrees, and in due time bore on the village green. There was a salmon in the pond, rising short at a cloud of midges to the tune of *Yip-i-addy;* but there was none to gaff him. The swing-boats were empty, cocoa-nuts sat still on their red sticks before white screens, and the gay-painted horses of the giddy-go-rounds revolved riderless. All was melody, green turf, bright water, and this greedy gambolling fish. When I had identified it by its grey gills and binoculars as Lingnam, I prostrated myself before Allah in that mirth which is more truly labour than any prayer. Then I turned to the purple Penfentenyou at the window, and wiped my eyes on the rug edge.

He raised the window half one cautious inch and bellowed through the crack: 'Did you see *him?* Have they got *you?* I can see lots of things from here. It's like a three-ring circus!'

'Can you see the station?' I replied, nodding towards the right rear mudguard.

He twisted and craned sideways, but could not command that beautiful view.

'No! What's it like?' he cried.

'Hell!' I shouted. The silvery-haired woman frowned; so did Penfentenyou, and, I think, apologised to her for my language.

'You're always so extreme,' he fluted reproachfully. 'You forget that nothing matters except the Idea. Besides, they are this lady's bees.'

He closed the window, and introduced us through it in dumb show; but he contrived to give the impression that *I* was the specimen under glass.

A spurt of damp steam saved me from apoplexy. The train had lost patience at last, and was coming into the station directly beneath me to see what was the matter. Happy voices sang and heads were thrust out all along the compartments, but none answered their songs or greetings. She halted, and the people began to get out. Then they began to get in again, as their friends in the waiting-rooms advised. All did not catch the warning, so there was congestion at the doors, but those whom the bees caught got in first.

Still the bees, more bent on their own business than wanton torture, kept to the south end of the platform by the bookstall, and that was why the completely exposed engine-driver at the north end of the train did not at first understand the hermetically sealed stationmaster when the latter shouted to him many times to 'get on out o' this.'

'Where are you?' was the reply. 'And what for?'

'It don't matter where I am, an' you'll get what-for in a minute if you don't shift,' said the stationmaster.

'Drop 'em at Parson's Meadow and they can walk up over the fields.'

That bare-armed, thin-shirted idiot, leaning out of the cab, took the stationmaster's orders as an insult to his dignity, and roared at the shut offices: 'You'll give me what-for, will you? Look 'ere, I'm not in the 'abit of——' His outstretched hand flew to his neck. . . . Do you know that if you sting an engine-driver it is the same as stinging his train? She starts with a jerk that nearly smashes the couplings, and runs, barking like a dog, till she is out of sight. Nor does she think about spilled people and parted families on the platform behind her. I had to do all that. There was a man called Fred, and his wife Harriet—a cheery, full-blooded couple—who interested me immensely before they battered their way into a small detached building, already densely occupied. There was also a nameless bachelor who sat under a half-opened umbrella and twirled it dizzily, which was so new a game that I applauded aloud.

When they had thoroughly cleared the ground, the bees set about making comb for publication at the bookstall counter. Presently some bold hearts tiptoed out of the waiting-rooms over the loud gravel with the consciously modest air of men leaving church, climbed the wooden staircase to the bridge, and so reached my level, where the inexhaustible bonnet-boxes were still vomiting squadrons and platoons. There was little need to bid them descend. They had wrapped their heads in handkerchiefs, so that they looked like the disappointed dead scuttling back to Purgatory. Only one old gentleman, pontifically draped in a banner embroidered 'Temperance and Fortitude,' ran the gauntlet

up-street, shouting as he passed me, 'It's night or Blücher, Mister.' They let him in at the White Hart, the pub. where I should have bought the beer.

After this the day sagged. I fell to reckoning how long a man in a Turkish bath, weakened by excessive laughter, could live without food, and specially drink; and how long a disenfranchised bee could hold out under the same conditions.

Obviously, since her one practical joke costs her her life, the bee can have but small sense of humour; but her fundamentally dismal and ungracious outlook on life impressed me beyond words. She had paralysed locomotion, wiped out trade, social intercourse, mutual trust, love, friendship, sport, music (the lonely steam-organ had run down at last), all that gives substance, colour or savour to life, and yet, in the barren desert she had created, was not one whit more near to the evolution of a saner order of things. The Heavens were darkened with the swarms' divided counsels; the street shimmered with their purposeless sallies. They clotted on tiles and gutter-pipes, and began frenziedly to build a cell or two of comb ere they discovered that their queen was not with them; then flung off to seek her, or whirled, dishevelled and insane, into another hissing nebula on the false rumour that she was there. I scowled upon them with disfavour, and a massy, blue thunder-head rose majestically from behind the elm-trees of Sumtner Barton Rectory, arched over and scowled with me. Then I realised that it was not bees nor locusts that had darkened the skies, but the oncoming of the malignant English thunder-storm—the one thing before which even Deborah the bee cannot express her silly little self.

'Aha! *Now* you'll catch it,' I said, as the herald gusts set the big drum rolling down the street like a box-kite. Up and up yearned the dark cloud, till the first lightning quivered and cut. Deborah cowered. Where she flew, there she fled; where she was, there she sat still; and the solid rain closed in on her as a book that is closed when the chapter is finished. By the time it had soaked to my second rug, Penfentenyou appeared at the window, wiping his false mouth on a napkin.

'Are you all right?' he inquired. 'Then *that's* all right! Mrs. Bellamy says that her bees don't sting in the wet. You'd better fetch Lingnam over. He's got to pay for them and the bicycle.'

I had no words which the silver-haired lady could listen to, but paddled across the flooded street between flashes to the pond on the green. Mr. Lingnam, scarcely visible through the sheeting downpour, trotted round the edge. He bore himself nobly, and lied at the mere sight of me.

'Isn't this wet?' he cried. 'It has drenched me to the skin. I shall need a change.'

'Come along,' I said. 'I don't know what you'll get, but you deserve more.'

Penfentenyou, dry, fed, and in command, let us in. 'You,' he whispered to me, 'are to wait in the scullery. Mrs. Bellamy didn't like the way you talked about her bees. Hsh! Hsh! She's a kind-hearted lady. She's a widow, Lingnam, but she's kept *his* clothes, and as soon as you've paid for the damage she'll rent you a suit. I've arranged it all!'

'Then tell him he mustn't undress in my hall,' said a voice from the stair-head.

'Tell *her*——' Lingnam began.

'Come and look at the pretty suit I've chosen,' Penfentenyou cooed, as one cajoling a maniac.

I staggered out-of-doors again, and fell into the car, whose ever-running machinery masked my yelps and hiccups. When I raised my forehead from the wheel, I saw that traffic through the village had been resumed, after, as my watch showed, one and one-half hour's suspension. There were two limousines, one landau, one doctor's car, three touring-cars, one patent steam-laundry van, three tricars, one traction-engine, some motor-cycles, one with a side-car, and one brewery lorry. It was the allegory of my own imperturbable country, delayed for a short time by unforeseen external events but now going about her business, and I blessed Her with tears in my eyes, even though I knew She looked upon me as drunk and incapable.

Then troops came over the bridge behind me—a company of dripping wet Regulars without any expression. In their rear, carrying the lunch-basket, marched the Agent-General and Holford the hired chauffeur.

'I say,' said the Agent-General, nodding at the darkened khaki backs. 'If *that's* what we've got to depend on in event of war they're a broken reed. They ran like hares—ran like hares, I tell you.'

'And you?' I asked.

'Oh, I just sauntered back over the bridge and stopped the traffic that end. Then I had lunch. 'Pity about the beer, though. I say—these cushions are sopping wet!'

'I'm sorry,' I said. 'I haven't had time to turn 'em.'

'Nor there wasn't any need to 'ave kept the engine runnin' all this time,' said Holford sternly. 'I'll 'ave to account for the expenditure of petrol. It exceeds the mileage indicated, you see.'

'I'm sorry,' I repeated. After all, that is the way that Taxpayers regard most crises.

The house-door opened and Penfentenyou and another came out into the now thinning rain.

'Ah! There you both are! Here's Lingnam,' he cried. 'He's got a little wet. He's had to change.'

'We saw that. I was too sore and weak to begin another laugh, but the Agent-General crumpled up where he stood. The late Mr. Bellamy must have been a man of tremendous personality, which he had impressed on every angle of his garments. I was told later that he had died in delirium tremens, which at once explained the pattern, and the reason why Mr. Lingnam, writhing inside it, swore so inspiredly. Of the deliberate and diffuse Federationist there remained no trace, save the binoculars and two damp whiskers. We stood on the pavement, before Elemental Man calling on Elemental Powers to condemn and incinerate Creation.

'Well, hadn't we better be getting back?' said the Agent-General.

'Look out!' I remarked casually. 'Those bonnet-boxes are full of bees still!'

'Are they?' said the livid Mr. Lingnam, and tilted them over with the late Mr. Bellamy's large boots. Deborah rolled out in drenched lumps into the swilling gutter. There was a muffled shriek at the window where Mrs. Bellamy gesticulated.

'It's all right. I've paid for them,' said Mr. Lingnam. He dumped out the last dregs like mould from a pot-bound flower-pot.

'What? Are you going to take 'em home with you?' said the Agent-General.

'No!' He passed a wet hand over his streaky fore-

head. 'Wasn't there a bicycle that was the beginning of this trouble?' said he.

'It's under the fore-axle, sir,' said Holford promptly. 'I can fish it out from 'ere.'

'Not till I've done with it, please.' Before we could stop him, he had jumped into the car and taken charge. The hireling leaped into her collar, surged, shrieked (less loudly than Mrs. Bellamy at the window), and swept on. That which came out behind her was, as Holford truly observed, no joy-wheel. Mr. Lingnam swung round the big drum in the market-place and thundered back, shouting: 'Leave it alone. It's my meat!'

'Mince-meat, 'e means,' said Holford after this second trituration. 'You couldn't say now it 'ad ever *been* one, could you?'

Mrs. Bellamy opened the window and spoke. It appears she had only charged for damage to the bicycle, not for the entire machine which Mr. Lingnam was ruthlessly gleaning, spoke by spoke, from the highway and cramming into the slack of the hood. At last he answered, and I have never seen a man foam at the mouth before. 'If you don't stop, I shall come into your house—in this car—and drive upstairs and—kill you!'

She stopped; he stopped. Holford took the wheel, and we got away. It was time, for the sun shone after the storm, and Deborah beneath the tiles and the eaves already felt its reviving influence compel her to her interrupted labours of federation. We warned the village policeman at the far end of the street that he might have to suspend traffic again. The proprietor of the giddy-go-round, swings, and cocoanut-shies wanted to know from whom, in this world or another, he could

recover damages. Mr. Lingnam referred him most directly to Mrs. Bellamy. . . . Then we went home.

After dinner that evening Mr. Lingnam rose stiffly in his place to make a few remarks on the Federation of the Empire on the lines of Co-ordinated, Offensive Operations, backed by the Entire Effective Forces, Moral, Military and Fiscal, of Permanently Mobilised Communities, the whole brought to bear, without any respect to the merits of any *casus belli*, instantaneously, automatically, and remorselessly at the first faint buzz of war.

'The trouble with Us,' said he, is that We take such an infernally long time making sure that We are right that We don't go ahead when things happen. For instance, *I* ought to have gone ahead instead of pulling up when I hit that bicycle.'

'But you were in the wrong, Lingnam, when you turned to the right,' I put in.

'I don't want to hear any more of your damned, detached, mugwumping excuses for the other fellow,' he snapped.

'Now you're beginning to see things,' said Penfenten-you. 'I hope you won't backslide when the swellings go down.'

THE SONG OF SEVEN CITIES

I was Lord of Cities very sumptuously builded.
Seven roaring Cities paid me tribute from afar.
Ivory their outposts were—the guardrooms of them gilded,
And garrisoned with Amazons invincible in war.

All the world went softly when it walked before my Cities—
Neither King nor Army vexed my peoples at their toil.
Never horse nor chariot irked or overbore my Cities,
Never Mob nor Ruler questioned whence they drew their spoil.

Banded, mailed and arrogant from sunrise unto sunset,
Singing while they sacked it, they possessed the land at large.
Yet when men would rob them, they resisted, they made onset
And pierced the smoke of battle with a thousand-sabred charge!

So they warred and trafficked only yesterday, my Cities.
To-day there is no mark or mound of where my Cities stood.

For the River rose at midnight and it washed away my Cities.
They are evened with Atlantis and the towns before the Flood.

Rain on rain-gorged channels raised the water-levels round them,
Freshet backed on freshet swelled and swept their world from sight,
Till the emboldened floods linked arms and flashing forward drowned them—
Drowned my Seven Cities and their peoples in one night!

Low among the alders lie their derelict foundations,
The beams wherein they trusted and the plinths whereon they built—
My rulers and their treasure and their unborn populations,
Dead, destroyed, aborted, and defiled with mud and silt!

The Daughters of the Palace whom they cherished in my Cities,
My silver-tongued Princesses, and the promise of their May—
Their bridegrooms of the June-tide—all have perished in my Cities,
With the harsh envenomed virgins that can neither love nor play.

I was Lord of Cities—I will build anew my Cities,
Seven, set on rocks, above the wrath of any flood.

Nor will I rest from search till I have filled anew my Cities
With peoples undefeated of the dark, enduring blood.

To the sound of trumpets shall their seed restore my Cities
Wealthy and well-weaponed, that once more may I behold
All the world go softly when it walks before my Cities,
And the horses and the chariots fleeing from them as of old!

'SWEPT AND GARNISHED'
(January, 1915)

WHEN the first waves of feverish cold stole over Frau Ebermann she very wisely telephoned for the doctor and went to bed. He diagnosed the attack as mild influenza, prescribed the appropriate remedies, and left her to the care of her one servant in her comfortable Berlin flat. Frau Ebermann, beneath the thick coverlet, curled up with what patience she could until the aspirin should begin to act, and Anna should come back from the chemist with the formamint, the ammoniated quinine, the eucalyptus, and the little tin steam-inhaler. Meantime, every bone in her body ached; her head throbbed; her hot, dry hands would not stay the same size for a minute together; and her body, tucked into the smallest possible compass, shrank from the chill of the well-warmed sheets.

Of a sudden she noticed that an imitation-lace cover which should have lain mathematically square with the imitation-marble top of the radiator behind the green plush sofa had slipped away so that one corner hung over the bronze-painted steam pipes. She recalled that she must have rested her poor head against the radiator-top while she was taking off her boots. She tried to get up and set the thing straight, but the radiator at once receded towards the horizon, which, unlike true

horizons, slanted diagonally, exactly parallel with the dropped lace edge of the cover. Frau Ebermann groaned through sticky lips and lay still.

'Certainly, I have a temperature,' she said. 'Certainly, I have a grave temperature. I should have been warned by that chill after dinner.'

She resolved to shut her hot-lidded eyes, but opened them in a little while to torture herself with the knowledge of that ungeometrical thing against the far wall. Then she saw a child—an untidy, thin-faced little girl of about ten, who must have strayed in from the adjoining flat. This proved—Frau Ebermann groaned again at the way the world falls to bits when one is sick—proved that Anna had forgotten to shut the outer door of the flat when she went to the chemist. Frau Ebermann had had children of her own, but they were all grown up now, and she had never been a child-lover in any sense. Yet the intruder might be made to serve her scheme of things.

'Make—put,' she muttered thickly, 'that white thing straight on the top of that yellow thing.'

The child paid no attention, but moved about the room, investigating everything that came in her way—the yellow cut-glass handles of the chest of drawers, the stamped bronze hook to hold back the heavy puce curtains, and the mauve enamel, New Art finger-plates on the door. Frau Ebermann watched indignantly.

'Aie! That is bad and rude. Go away!' she cried, though it hurt her to raise her voice. 'Go away by the road you came!' The child passed behind the bed-foot, where she could not see her. 'Shut the door as you go. I will speak to Anna, but—first, put that white thing straight.'

She closed her eyes in misery of body and soul. The outer door clicked, and Anna entered, very penitent that she had stayed so long at the chemist's. But it had been difficult to find the proper type of inhaler, and——

'Where did the child go?' moaned Frau Ebermann—'the child that was here?'

'There was no child,' said startled Anna. 'How should any child come in when I shut the door behind me after I go out? All the keys of the flats are different.'

'No, no! You forgot this time. But my back is aching, and up my legs also. Besides, who knows what it may have fingered and upset? Look and see.'

'Nothing is fingered, nothing is upset,' Anna replied, as she took the inhaler from its paper box.

'Yes, there is. Now I remember all about it. Put—put that white thing, with the open edge—the lace, I mean—quite straight on that——' she pointed. Anna, accustomed to her ways, understood and went to it.

'Now, is it quite straight?' Frau Ebermann demanded.

'Perfectly,' said Anna. 'In fact, in the very centre of the radiator.' Anna measured the equal margins with her knuckle, as she had been told to do when she first took service.

'And my tortoise-shell hair brushes?' Frau Ebermann could not command her dressing-table from where she lay.

'Perfectly straight, side by side in the big tray, and the comb laid across them. Your watch also in the coralline watch-holder. Everything'—she moved round the room to make sure—'everything is as you have it when you are well.' Frau Ebermann sighed with re-

lief. It seemed to her that the room and her head had suddenly grown cooler.

'Good!' said she. 'Now warm my nightgown in the kitchen, so it will be ready when I have perspired. And the towels also. Make the inhaler steam, and put in the eucalyptus; that is good for the larynx. Then sit you in the kitchen, and come when I ring. But, first, my hot-water bottle.'

It was brought and scientifically tucked in.

'What news?' said Frau Ebermann drowsily. She had not been out that day.

'Another victory,' said Anna. 'Many more prisoners and guns.'

Frau Ebermann purred, one might almost say grunted contentedly.

'That is good too,' she said; and Anna, after lighting the inhaler-lamp, went out.

Frau Ebermann reflected that in an hour or so the aspirin would begin to work, and all would be well. To-morrow—no, the day after—she would take up life with something to talk over with her friends at coffee. It was rare—every one knew it—that she should be overcome by any ailment. Yet in all her distresses she had not allowed the minutest deviation from daily routine and ritual. She would tell her friends—she ran over their names one by one—exactly what measures she had taken against the lace cover on the radiator-top and in regard to her two tortoise-shell hair-brushes and the comb at right angles. How she had set everything in order—everything in order. She roved further afield as she wriggled her toes luxuriously on the hot-water bottle. If it pleased our dear God to take her to Himself, and she was not so young as she had been—

there was that plate of the four lower ones in the blue tooth-glass, for instance—He should find all her belongings fit to meet His eye. 'Swept and garnished' were the words that shaped themselves in her intent brain. 'Swept and garnished for——'

No, it was certainly not for the dear Lord that she had swept; she would have her room swept out tomorrow or the day after, and garnished. Her hands began to swell again into huge pillows of nothingness. Then they shrank, and so did her head, to minute dots. It occurred to her that she was waiting for some event, some tremendously important event, to come to pass. She lay with shut eyes for a long time till her head and hands should return to their proper size.

She opened her eyes with a jerk.

'How stupid of me,' she said aloud, 'to set the room in order for a parcel of dirty little children!'

They were there—five of them, two little boys and three girls—headed by the anxious-eyed ten-year-old whom she had seen before. They must have entered by the outer door, which Anna had neglected to shut behind her when she returned with the inhaler. She counted them backward and forward as one counts scales—one, two, three, four, five.

They took no notice of her, but hung about, first on one foot then on the other, like strayed chickens, the smaller ones holding by the larger. They had the air of utterly wearied passengers in a railway waiting-room, and their clothes were disgracefully dirty.

'Go away!' cried Frau Ebermann at last, after she had struggled, it seemed to her, for years to shape the words.

'You called?' said Anna at the living-room door.

'No,' said her mistress. 'Did you shut the flat door when you came in?'

'Assuredly,' said Anna. 'Besides, it is made to catch shut of itself.'

'Then go away,' said she, very little above a whisper. If Anna pretended not to see the children, she would speak to Anna later on.

'And now,' she said, turning towards them as soon as the door closed. The smallest of the crowd smiled at her, and shook his head before he buried it in his sister's skirts.

'Why—don't—you—go—away?' she whispered earnestly.

Again they took no notice, but, guided by the elder girl, set themselves to climb, boots and all, on to the green plush sofa in front of the radiator. The little boys had to be pushed, as they could not compass the stretch unaided. They settled themselves in a row, with small gasps of relief, and pawed the plush approvingly.

'I ask you—I ask you why do you not go away—why do you not go away?' Frau Ebermann found herself repeating the question twenty times. It seemed to her that everything in the world hung on the answer. 'You know you should not come into houses and rooms unless you are invited. Not houses and bedrooms, you know.'

'No,' a solemn little six-year-old repeated, 'not houses nor bedrooms, nor dining-rooms, nor churches, nor all those places. Shouldn't come in. It's rude.'

'Yes, he said so,' the younger girl put in proudly. 'He said it. He told them only pigs would do that.' The line nodded and dimpled one to another with little explosive giggles, such as children use when they tell deeds of great daring against their elders.

'If you know it is wrong, that makes it much worse,' said Frau Ebermann.

'Oh yes; much worse,' they assented cheerfully, till the smallest boy changed his smile to a baby wail of weariness.

'When will they come for us?' he asked, and the girl at the head of the row hauled him bodily into her square little capable lap.

'He's tired,' she explained. 'He is only four. He only had his first breeches this spring.' They came almost under his armpits, and were held up by broad linen braces, which, his sorrow diverted for the moment, he patted proudly.

'Yes, beautiful, dear,' said both girls.

'Go away!' said Frau Ebermann. 'Go home to your father and mother!'

Their faces grew grave at once.

'H'sh! We *can't*,' whispered the eldest. 'There isn't anything left.'

'All gone,' a boy echoed, and he puffed through pursed lips. 'Like *that*, uncle told me. Both cows too.'

'And my own three ducks,' the boy on the girl's lap said sleepily.

'So, you see, we came here.' The elder girl leaned forward a little, caressing the child she rocked.

'I—I don't understand,' said Frau Ebermann. 'Are you lost, then? You must tell our police.'

'Oh no; we are only waiting.'

'But what are you waiting *for ?*'

'We are waiting for our people to come for us. They told us to come here and wait for them. So we are waiting till they come,' the eldest girl replied.

'Yes. We are waiting till our people come for us,' said all the others in chorus.

'But,' said Frau Ebermann very patiently—'but now tell me, for I tell you that I am not in the least angry, where do you come from? Where do you come from?'

The five gave the names of two villages of which she had read in the papers.

'That is silly,' said Frau Ebermann. 'The people fired on us, and they were punished. Those places are wiped out, stamped flat.'

'Yes, yes, wiped out, stamped flat. That is why and —I have lost the ribbon off my pigtail,' said the younger girl. She looked behind her over the sofa-back.

'It is not here,' said the elder. 'It was lost before. Don't you remember?'

'Now, if you are lost, you must go and tell our police. They will take care of you and give you food,' said Frau Ebermann. 'Anna will show you the way there.'

'No,'—this was the six-year-old with the smile,— 'we must wait here till our people come for us. Mustn't we, sister?'

'Of course. We wait here till our people come for us. All the world knows that,' said the eldest girl.

'Yes.' The boy in her lap had waked again. 'Little children, too—as little as Henri, and *he* doesn't wear trousers yet. As little as all that.'

'I don't understand,' said Frau Ebermann, shivering. In spite of the heat of the room and the damp breath of the steam-inhaler, the aspirin was not doing its duty.

The girl raised her blue eyes and looked at the woman for an instant.

'You see,' she said, emphasising her statements with her fingers, '*they* told *us* to wait *here* till *our* people came

for us. So we came. We wait till our people come for us.'

'That is silly again,' said Frau Ebermann. 'It is no good for you to wait here. Do you know what this place is? You have been to school? It is Berlin, the capital of Germany.'

'Yes, yes,' they all cried; 'Berlin, capital of Germany. We know that. That is why we came.'

'So, you see, it is no good,' she said triumphantly, 'because your people can never come for you here.'

'They told us to come here and wait till our people came for us.' They delivered this as if it were a lesson in school. Then they sat still, their hands orderly folded on their laps, smiling as sweetly as ever.

'Go away! Go away!' Frau Ebermann shrieked.

'You called?' said Anna, entering.

'No. Go away! Go away!'

'Very good, old cat,' said the maid under her breath. 'Next time you *may* call,' and she returned to her friend in the kitchen.

'I ask you—ask you, *please* to go away,' Frau Ebermann pleaded. 'Go to my Anna through that door, and she will give you cakes and sweeties. It is not kind of you to come into my room and behave so badly.'

'Where else shall we go now?' the elder girl demanded, turning to her little company. They fell into discussion. One preferred the broad street with trees, another the railway station; but when she suggested an Emperor's palace, they agreed with her.

'We will go then,' she said, and added half apologetically to Frau Ebermann, 'You see, they are so little they like to meet all the others.'

'What others?' said Frau Ebermann.

'The others—hundreds and hundreds and thousands and thousands of the others.'

'That is a lie. There cannot be a hundred even, much less a thousand,' cried Frau Ebermann.

'So?' said the girl politely.

'Yes. *I* tell you; and I have very good information. I know how it happened. You should have been more careful. You should not have run out to see the horses and guns passing. That is how it is done when our troops pass through. My son has written me so.'

They had clambered down from the sofa, and gathered round the bed with eager, interested eyes.

'Horses and guns going by—how fine!' some one whispered.

'Yes, yes; believe me, *that* is how the accidents to the children happen. You must know yourself that it is true. One runs out to look——'

'But I never saw any at all,' a boy cried sorrowfully. 'Only one noise I heard. That was when Aunt Emmeline's house fell down.'

'But listen to me. *I* am telling you! One runs out to look, because one is little and cannot see well. So one peeps between the man's legs, and then—you know how close those big horses and guns turn the corners—then one's foot slips and one gets run over. That's how it happens. Several times it had happened, but not many times; certainly not a hundred, perhaps not twenty. So, you see, you *must* be all. Tell me now that you are all that there are, and Anna shall give you the cakes.'

'Thousands,' a boy repeated monotonously. 'Then we all come here to wait till our people come for us.'

'But now we will go away from here. The poor lady is tired,' said the elder girl, plucking his sleeve.

'Oh, you hurt, you hurt!' he cried, and burst into tears.

'What is that for?' said Frau Ebermann. 'To cry in a room where a poor lady is sick is very inconsiderate.'

'Oh, but look, lady!' said the elder girl.

Frau Ebermann looked and saw.

'*Au revoir*, lady.' They made their little smiling bows and curtseys undisturbed by her loud cries. '*Au revoir*, lady. We will wait till our people come for us.'

When Anna at last ran in, she found her mistress on her knees, busily cleaning the floor with the lace cover from the radiator, because, she explained, it was all spotted with the blood of five children—she was perfectly certain there could not be more than five in the whole world—who had gone away for the moment, but were now waiting round the corner, and Anna was to find them and give them cakes to stop the bleeding, while her mistress swept and garnished that Our dear Lord when He came might find everything as it should be.

MARY POSTGATE

(1915)

OF Miss Mary Postgate, Lady McCausland wrote that she was 'thoroughly conscientious, tidy, companionable, and ladylike. I am very sorry to part with her, and shall always be interested in her welfare.'

Miss Fowler engaged her on this recommendation, and to her surprise, for she had had experience of companions, found that it was true. Miss Fowler was nearer sixty than fifty at the time, but though she needed care she did not exhaust her attendant's vitality. On the contrary, she gave out, stimulatingly and with reminiscences. Her father had been a minor Court official in the days when the Great Exhibition of 1851 had just set its seal on Civilisation made perfect. Some of Miss Fowler's tales, none the less, were not always for the young. Mary was not young, and though her speech was as colourless as her eyes or her hair, she was never shocked. She listened unflinchingly to every one; said at the end, 'How interesting!' or 'How shocking!' as the case might be, and never again referred to it, for she prided herself on a trained mind, which 'did not dwell on these things.' She was, too, a treasure at domestic accounts, for which the village tradesmen, with their weekly books, loved her not. Otherwise she had

no enemies; provoked no jealousy even among the plainest; neither gossip nor slander had ever been traced to her; she supplied the odd place at the Rector's or the Doctor's table at half an hour's notice; she was a sort of public aunt to very many small children of the village street, whose parents, while accepting everything, would have been swift to resent what they called 'patronage'; she served on the Village Nursing Committee as Miss Fowler's nominee when Miss Fowler was crippled by rheumatoid arthritis, and came out of six months' fortnightly meetings equally respected by all the cliques.

And when Fate threw Miss Fowler's nephew, an unlovely orphan of eleven, on Miss Fowler's hands, Mary Postgate stood to her share of the business of education as practised in private and public schools. She checked printed clothes-lists, and unitemised bills of extras; wrote to Head and House masters, matrons, nurses and doctors, and grieved or rejoiced over half-term reports. Young Wyndham Fowler repaid her in his holidays by calling her 'Gatepost,' 'Postey,' or 'Packthread,' by thumping her between her narrow shoulders, or by chasing her bleating, round the garden, her large mouth open, her large nose high in air, at a stiff-necked shamble very like a camel's. Later on he filled the house with clamour, argument, and harangues as to his personal needs, likes and dislikes, and the limitations of 'you women,' reducing Mary to tears of physical fatigue, or, when he chose to be humorous, of helpless laughter. At crises, which multiplied as he grew older, she was his ambassadress and his interpretress to Miss Fowler, who had no large sympathy with the young; a vote in his interest at the councils on his future; his sewing-woman, strictly accountable for mis-

laid boots and garments; always his butt and his slave.

And when he decided to become a solicitor, and had entered an office in London; when his greeting had changed from 'Hullo, Postey, you old beast,' to 'Mornin', Packthread,' there came a war which, unlike all wars that Mary could remember, did not stay decently outside England and in the newspapers, but intruded on the lives of people whom she knew. As she said to Miss Fowler, it was 'most vexatious.' It took the Rector's son who was going into business with his elder brother; it took the Colonel's nephew on the eve of fruit-farming in Canada; it took Mrs. Grant's son who, his mother said, was devoted to the ministry; and, very early indeed, it took Wynn Fowler, who announced on a postcard that he had joined the Flying Corps and wanted a cardigan waistcoat.

'He must go, and he must have the waistcoat,' said Miss Fowler. So Mary got the proper-sized needles and wool, while Miss Fowler told the men of her establishment—two gardeners and an odd man, aged sixty—that those who could join the Army had better do so. The gardeners left. Cheape, the odd man, stayed on, and was promoted to the gardener's cottage. The cook, scorning to be limited in luxuries, also left, after a spirited scene with Miss Fowler, and took the housemaid with her. Miss Fowler gazetted Nellie, Cheape's seventeen-year-old daughter, to the vacant post; Mrs. Cheape to the rank of cook, with occasional cleaning bouts; and the reduced establishment moved forward smoothly.

Wynn demanded an increase in his allowance. Miss Fowler, who always looked facts in the face, said, 'He

must have it. The chances are he won't live long to draw it, and if three hundred makes him happy——'

Wynn was grateful, and came over, in his tight-buttoned uniform, to say so. His training centre was not thirty miles away, and his talk was so technical that it had to be explained by charts of the various types of machines. He gave Mary such a chart.

'And you'd better study it, Postey,' he said. 'You'll be seeing a lot of 'em soon.' So Mary studied the chart, but when Wynn next arrived to swell and exalt himself before his womenfolk, she failed badly in cross-examination, and he rated her as in the old days.

'You *look* more or less like a human being,' he said in his new Service voice. 'You *must* have had a brain at some time in your past. What have you done with it? Where d'you keep it? A sheep would know more than you do, Postey. You're lamentable. You are less use than an empty tin can, you dowey old cassowary.'

'I suppose that's how your superior officer talks to *you ?*' said Miss Fowler from her chair.

'But Postey doesn't mind,' Wynn replied. 'Do you, Packthread?'

'Why? Was Wynn saying anything? I shall get this right next time you come,' she muttered, and knitted her pale brows again over the diagrams of Taubes, Farmans, and Zeppelins.

In a few weeks the mere land and sea battles which she read to Miss Fowler after breakfast passed her like idle breath. Her heart and her interest were high in the air with Wynn, who had finished 'rolling' (whatever that might be) and had gone on from a 'taxi' to a machine more or less his own. One morning it circled

over their very chimneys, alighted on Vegg's Heath, almost outside the garden gate, and Wynn came in, blue with cold, shouting for food. He and she drew Miss Fowler's bath-chair, as they had often done, along the Heath foot-path to look at the biplane. Mary observed that 'it smelt very badly.'

'Postey, I believe you think with your nose,' said Wynn. 'I know you don't with your mind. Now, what type's that?'

'I'll go and get the chart,' said Mary.

'You're hopeless! You haven't the mental capacity of a white mouse,' he cried, and explained the dials and the sockets for bomb-dropping till it was time to mount and ride the wet clouds once more.

'Ah!' said Mary, as the stinking thing flared upward. 'Wait till our Flying Corps gets to work! Wynn says it's much safer than in the trenches.'

'I wonder,' said Miss Fowler. 'Tell Cheape to come and tow me home again.'

'It's all downhill. I can do it,' said Mary, 'if you put the brake on.' She laid her lean self against the pushing-bar and home they trundled.

'Now, be careful you aren't heated and catch a chill,' said overdressed Miss Fowler.

'Nothing makes me perspire,' said Mary. As she bumped the chair under the porch she straightened her long back. The exertion had given her a colour, and the wind had loosened a wisp of hair across her forehead. Miss Fowler glanced at her.

'What do you ever think of, Mary?' she demanded suddenly.

'Oh, Wynn says he wants another three pairs of stockings—as thick as we can make them.'

'Yes. But I mean the things that women think about. Here you are, more than forty——'

'Forty-four' said truthful Mary.

'Well?'

'Well?' Mary offered Miss Fowler her shoulder as usual.

'And you've been with me ten years now.'

'Let's see,' said Mary. 'Wynn was eleven when he came. He's twenty now, and I came two years before that. It must be eleven.'

'Eleven! And you've never told me anything that matters in all that while. Looking back, it seems to me that *I*'ve done all the talking.'

'I'm afraid I'm not much of a conversationalist. As Wynn says, I haven't the mind. Let me take your hat.'

Miss Fowler, moving stiffly from the hip, stamped her rubber-tipped stick on the tiled hall floor. 'Mary, aren't you *anything* except a companion? Would you *ever* have been anything except a companion?'

Mary hung up the garden hat on its proper peg. 'No,' she said after consideration. 'I don't imagine I ever should. But I've no imagination, I'm afraid.'

She fetched Miss Fowler her eleven-o'clock glass of Contrexeville.

That was the wet December when it rained six inches to the month, and the women went abroad as little as might be. Wynn's flying chariot visited them several times, and for two mornings (he had warned her by postcard) Mary heard the thresh of his propellers at dawn. The second time she ran to the window, and stared at the whitening sky. A little blur passed overhead. She lifted her lean arms towards it.

That evening at six o'clock there came an announce-

ment in an official envelope that Second Lieutenant W. Fowler had been killed during a trial flight. Death was instantaneous. She read it and carried it to Miss Fowler.

'I never expected anything else,' said Miss Fowler; 'but I'm sorry it happened before he had done anything.'

The room was whirling round Mary Postgate, but she found herself quite steady in the midst of it.

'Yes,' she said. 'It's a great pity he didn't die in action after he had killed somebody.'

'He was killed instantly. That's one comfort,' Miss Fowler went on.

'But Wynn says the shock of a fall kills a man at once —whatever happens to the tanks,' quoted Mary.

The room was coming to rest now. She heard Miss Fowler say impatiently, 'But why can't we cry, Mary?' and herself replying, 'There's nothing to cry for. He has done his duty as much as Mrs. Grant's son did.'

'And when he died, *she* came and cried all the morning,' said Miss Fowler. 'This only makes me feel tired —terribly tired. Will you help me to bed, please, Mary?—And I think I'd like the hot-water bottle.'

So Mary helped her and sat beside, talking of Wynn in his riotous youth.

'I believe,' said Miss Fowler suddenly, 'that old people and young people slip from under a stroke like this. The middle-aged feel it most.'

'I expect that's true,' said Mary, rising. 'I'm going to put away the things in his room now. Shall we wear mourning?'

'Certainly not,' said Miss Fowler. 'Except, of course, at the funeral. I can't go. You will. I want

you to arrange about his being buried here. What a blessing it didn't happen at Salisbury!'

Every one, from the Authorities of the Flying Corps to the Rector, was most kind and sympathetic. Mary found herself for the moment in a world where bodies were in the habit of being despatched by all sorts of conveyances to all sorts of places. And at the funeral two young men in buttoned-up uniforms stood beside the grave and spoke to her afterwards.

'You're Miss Postgate, aren't you?' said one. 'Fowler told me about you. He was a good chap—a first-class fellow—a great loss.'

'Great loss!' growled his companion. 'We're all awfully sorry.'

'How high did he fall from?' Mary whispered.

'Pretty nearly four thousand feet, I should think, didn't he? You were up that day, Monkey?'

'All of that,' the other child replied. 'My bar made three thousand, and I wasn't as high as him by a lot.'

'Then *that's* all right,' said Mary. 'Thank you very much.'

They moved away as Mrs. Grant flung herself weeping on Mary's flat chest, under the lych-gate, and cried, '*I* know how it feels! *I* know how it feels!'

'But both his parents are dead,' Mary returned, as she fended her off. 'Perhaps they've all met by now,' she added vaguely as she escaped towards the coach.

'I've thought of that too,' wailed Mrs. Grant; 'but then he'll be practically a stranger to them. Quite embarrassing!'

Mary faithfully reported every detail of the ceremony to Miss Fowler, who, when she described Mrs. Grant's outburst, laughed aloud.

'Oh, how Wynn would have enjoyed it! He was always utterly unreliable at funerals. D'you remember——' And they talked of him again, each piecing out the other's gaps. 'And now,' said Miss Fowler, 'we'll pull up the blinds and we'll have a general tidy. That always does us good. Have you seen to Wynn's things?'

'Everything—since he first came,' said Mary. 'He was never destructive—even with his toys.'

They faced that neat room.

'It can't be natural not to cry,' Mary said at last. 'I'm *so* afraid you'll have a reaction.'

'As I told you, we old people slip from under the stroke. It's you I'm afraid for. Have you cried yet?'

'I can't. It only makes me angry with the Germans.'

'That's sheer waste of vitality,' said Miss Fowler. 'We must live till the war's finished.' She opened a full wardrobe. 'Now, I've been thinking things over. This is my plan. All his civilian clothes can be given away—Belgian refugees, and so on.'

Mary nodded. 'Boots, collars, and gloves?'

'Yes. We don't need to keep anything except his cap and belt.'

'They came back yesterday with his Flying Corps clothes'—Mary pointed to a roll on the little iron bed.

'Ah, but keep his Service things. Some one may be glad of them later. Do you remember his sizes?'

'Five feet eight and a half; thirty-six inches round the chest. But he told me he's just put on an inch and a half. I'll mark it on a label and tie it on his sleeping-bag.'

'So that disposes of *that*,' said Miss Fowler, tapping the palm of one hand with the ringed third finger of the

other. 'What waste it all is! We'll get his old school trunk to-morrow and pack his civilian clothes.'

'And the rest?' said Mary. 'His books and pictures and the games and the toys—and—and the rest?'

'My plan is to burn every single thing,' said Miss Fowler. 'Then we shall know where they are and no one can handle them afterwards. What do you think?'

'I think that would be much the best,' said Mary. 'But there's such a lot of them.'

'We'll burn them in the destructor,' said Miss Fowler.

This was an open-air furnace for the consumption of refuse; a little circular four-foot tower of pierced brick over an iron grating. Miss Fowler had noticed the design in a gardening journal years ago, and had had it built at the bottom of the garden. It suited her tidy soul, for it saved unsightly rubbish-heaps, and the ashes lightened the stiff clay soil.

Mary considered for a moment, saw her way clear, and nodded again. They spent the evening putting away well-remembered civilian suits, underclothes that Mary had marked, and the regiments of very gaudy socks and ties. A second trunk was needed, and, after that, a little packing-case, and it was late next day when Cheape and the local carrier lifted them to the cart. The Rector luckily knew of a friend's son, about five feet eight and a half inches high, to whom a complete Flying Corps outfit would be most acceptable, and sent his gardener's son down with a barrow to take delivery of it. The cap was hung up in Miss Fowler's bedroom, the belt in Miss Postgate's; for, as Miss Fowler said, they had no desire to make tea-party talk of them.

'That disposes of *that*,' said Miss Fowler. 'I'll leave the rest to you, Mary. I can't run up and down the

garden. You'd better take the big clothes-basket and get Nellie to help you.'

'I shall take the wheel-barrow and do it myself,' said Mary, and for once in her life closed her mouth.

Miss Fowler, in moments of irritation, had called Mary deadly methodical. She put on her oldest waterproof and gardening-hat and her ever-slipping goloshes, for the weather was on the edge of more rain. She gathered fire-lighters from the kitchen, a half-scuttle of coals, and a faggot of brushwood. These she wheeled in the barrow down the mossed paths to the dank little laurel shrubbery where the destructor stood under the drip of three oaks. She climbed the wire fence into the Rector's glebe just behind, and from his tenant's rick pulled two large armfuls of good hay, which she spread neatly on the fire-bars. Next, journey by journey, passing Miss Fowler's white face at the morning-room window each time, she brought down in the towel-covered clothes-basket, on the wheel-barrow, thumbed and used Hentys, Marryats, Levers, Stevensons, Baroness Orczys, Garvices, schoolbooks, and atlases, unrelated piles of the *Motor Cyclist*, the *Light Car*, and catalogues of Olympia Exhibitions; the remnants of a fleet of sailing-ships from nine-penny cutters to a three-guinea yacht; a prep.-school dressing-gown; bats from three-and-sixpence to twenty-four shillings; cricket and tennis balls; disintegrated steam and clockwork locomotives with their twisted rails; a grey and red tin model of a submarine; a dumb gramophone and cracked records; golf-clubs that had to be broken across the knee, like his walking-sticks, and an assegai; photographs of private and public school cricket and football elevens, and his O.T.C. on the line of march; kodaks,

and film-rolls; some pewters, and one real silver cup, for boxing competitions and Junior Hurdles; sheaves of school photographs; Miss Fowler's photograph; her own which he had borne off in fun and (good care she took not to ask!) had never returned; a playbox with a secret drawer; a load of flannels, belts, and jerseys, and a pair of spiked shoes unearthed in the attic; a packet of all the letters that Miss Fowler and she had ever written to him, kept for some absurd reason through all these years; a five-day attempt at a diary; framed pictures of racing motors in full Brooklands career, and load upon load of undistinguishable wreckage of tool-boxes, rabbit-hutches, electric batteries, tin soldiers, fret-saw outfits, and jig-saw puzzles.

Miss Fowler at the window watched her come and go, and said to herself, 'Mary's an old woman. I never realised it before.'

After lunch she recommended her to rest.

'I'm not in the least tired,' said Mary. 'I've got it all arranged. I'm going to the village at two o'clock for some paraffin. Nellie hasn't enough, and the walk will do me good.'

She made one last quest round the house before she started, and found that she had overlooked nothing. It began to mist as soon as she had skirted Vegg's Heath, where Wynn used to descend—it seemed to her that she could almost hear the beat of his propellers overhead, but there was nothing to see. She hoisted her umbrella and lunged into the blind wet till she had reached the shelter of the empty village. As she came out of Mr. Kidd's shop with a bottle full of paraffin in her string shopping-bag, she met Nurse Eden, the village nurse, and fell into talk with her, as usual, about

the village children. They were just parting opposite the 'Royal Oak,' when a gun, they fancied, was fired immediately behind the house. It was followed by a child's shriek dying into a wail.

'Accident!' said Nurse Eden promptly, and dashed through the empty bar, followed by Mary. They found Mrs. Gerritt, the publican's wife, who could only gasp and point to the yard, where a little cart-lodge was sliding sideways amid a clatter of tiles. Nurse Eden snatched up a sheet drying before the fire, ran out, lifted something from the ground, and flung the sheet round it. The sheet turned scarlet and half her uniform too, as she bore the load into the kitchen. It was little Edna Gerritt, aged nine, whom Mary had known since her perambulator days.

'Am I hurted bad?' Edna asked, and died between Nurse Eden's dripping hands. The sheet fell aside and for an instant, before she could shut her eyes, Mary saw the ripped and shredded body.

'It's a wonder she spoke at all,' said Nurse Eden. 'What in God's name was it?'

'A bomb,' said Mary.

'One o' the Zeppelins?'

'No. An aeroplane. I thought I heard it on the Heath, but I fancied it was one of ours. It must have shut off its engines as it came down. That's why we didn't notice it.'

'The filthy pigs!' said Nurse Eden, all white and shaken. 'See the pickle I'm in! Go and tell Dr. Hennis, Miss Postgate.' Nurse looked at the mother, who had dropped face down on the floor. 'She's only in a fit. Turn her over.'

Mary heaved Mrs. Gerritt right side up, and hurried

off for the doctor. When she told her tale, he asked her to sit down in the surgery till he got her something.

'But I don't need it, I assure you,' said she. 'I don't think it would be wise to tell Miss Fowler about it, do you? Her heart is so irritable in this weather.'

Dr. Hennis looked at her admiringly as he packed up his bag.

'No. Don't tell anybody till we're sure,' he said, and hastened to the 'Royal Oak,' while Mary went on with the paraffin. The village behind her was as quiet as usual, for the news had not yet spread. She frowned a little to herself, her large nostrils expanded uglily, and from time to time she muttered a phrase which Wynn, who never restrained himself before his women-folk, had applied to the enemy. 'Bloody pagans! They *are* bloody pagans. But,' she continued, falling back on the teaching that had made her what she was, 'one mustn't let one's mind dwell on these things.'

Before she reached the house Dr. Hennis, who was also a special constable, overtook her in his car.

'Oh, Miss Postgate,' he said, 'I wanted to tell you that that accident at the "Royal Oak" was due to Gerritt's stable tumbling down. It's been dangerous for a long time. It ought to have been condemned.'

'I thought I heard an explosion too,' said Mary.

'You might have been misled by the beams snapping. I've been looking at 'em. They were dry-rotted through and through. Of course, as they broke, they would make a noise just like a gun.'

'Yes?' said Mary politely.

'Poor little Edna was playing underneath it,' he went on, still holding her with his eyes, 'and that and the tiles cut her to pieces, you see?'

'I saw it,' said Mary, shaking her head. 'I heard it too.'

'Well, we cannot be sure.' Dr. Hennis changed his tone completely. 'I know both you and Nurse Eden (I've been speaking to her) are perfectly trustworthy, and I can rely on you not to say anything—yet at least. It is no good to stir up people unless——'

'Oh, I never do—anyhow,' said Mary, and Dr. Hennis went on to the county town.

After all, she told herself, it might, just possibly, have been the collapse of the old stable that had done all those things to poor little Edna. She was sorry she had even hinted at other things, but Nurse Eden was discretion itself. By the time she reached home the affair seemed increasingly remote by its very monstrosity. As she came in, Miss Fowler told her that a couple of aeroplanes had passed half an hour ago.

'I thought I heard them,' she replied, 'I'm going down to the garden now. I've got the paraffin.'

'Yes, but—what *have* you got on your boots? They're soaking wet. Change them at once.'

Not only did Mary obey but she wrapped the boots in a newspaper, and put them into the string bag with the bottle. So, armed with the longest kitchen poker, she left.

'It's raining again,' was Miss Fowler's last word, 'but—I know you won't be happy till that's disposed of.'

'It won't take long. I've got everything down there, and I've put the lid on the destructor to keep the wet out.'

The shrubbery was filling with twilight by the time she had completed her arrangements and sprinkled the

sacrificial oil. As she lit the match that would burn her heart to ashes, she heard a groan or a grunt behind the dense Portugal laurels.

'Cheape?' she called impatiently, but Cheape, with his ancient lumbago, in his comfortable cottage would be the last man to profane the sanctuary. 'Sheep,' she concluded, and threw in the fusee. The pyre went up in a roar, and the immediate flame hastened night around her.

'How Wynn would have loved this!' she thought, stepping back from the blaze.

By its light she saw, half hidden behind a laurel not five paces away, a bareheaded man sitting very stiffly at the foot of one of the oaks. A broken branch lay across his lap—one booted leg protruding from beneath it. His head moved ceaselessly from side to side, but his body was as still as the tree's trunk. He was dressed—she moved sideways to look more closely—in a uniform something like Wynn's, with a flap buttoned across the chest. For an instant, she had some idea that it might be one of the young flying men she had met at the funeral. But their heads were dark and glossy. This man's was as pale as a baby's, and so closely cropped that she could see the disgusting pinky skin beneath. His lips moved.

'What do you say?' Mary moved towards him and stooped.

'Laty! Laty! Laty!' he muttered, while his hands picked at the dead wet leaves. There was no doubt as to his nationality. It made her so angry that she strode back to the destructor, though it was still too hot to use the poker there. Wynn's books seemed to be catching well. She looked up at the oak behind the man; several

of the light upper and two or three rotten lower branches had broken and scattered their rubbish on the shrubbery path. On the lowest fork a helmet with dependent strings, showed like a bird's-nest in the light of a long-tongued flame. Evidently this person had fallen through the tree. Wynn had told her that it was quite possible for people to fall out of aeroplanes. Wynn told her too, that trees were useful things to break an aviator's fall, but in this case the aviator must have been broken or he would have moved from his queer position. He seemed helpless except for his horrible rolling head. On the other hand, she could see a pistol case at his belt —and Mary loathed pistols. Months ago, after reading certain Belgian reports together, she and Miss Fowler had had dealings with one—a huge revolver with flat-nosed bullets, which latter, Wynn said, were forbidden by the rules of war to be used against civilised enemies. 'They're good enough for us,' Miss Fowler had replied. 'Show Mary how it works.' And Wynn, laughing at the mere possibility of any such need, had led the craven winking Mary into the Rector's disused quarry, and had shown her how to fire the terrible machine. It lay now in the top-left-hand drawer of her toilet-table—a memento not included in the burning. Wynn would be pleased to see how she was not afraid.

She slipped up to the house to get it. When she came through the rain, the eyes in the head were alive with expectation. The mouth even tried to smile. But at sight of the revolver its corners went down just like Edna Gerritt's. A tear trickled from one eye, and the head rolled from shoulder to shoulder as though trying to point out something.

'Cassée. Tout cassée,' it whimpered.

'What do you say?' said Mary disgustedly, keeping well to one side, though only the head moved.

'Cassée,' it repeated. 'Che me rends. Le médicin! Toctor!'

'Nein!' said she, bringing all her small German to bear with the big pistol. 'Ich haben der todt Kinder gesehn.'

The head was still. Mary's hand dropped. She had been careful to keep her finger off the trigger for fear of accidents. After a few moments' waiting, she returned to the destructor, where the flames were falling, and churned up Wynn's charring books with the poker. Again the head groaned for the doctor.

'Stop that!' said Mary, and stamped her foot. 'Stop that, you bloody pagan!'

The words came quite smoothly and naturally. They were Wynn's own words, and Wynn was a gentleman who for no consideration on earth would have torn little Edna into those vividly coloured strips and strings. But this thing hunched under the oak-tree had done that thing. It was no question of reading horrors out of newspapers to Miss Fowler. Mary had seen it with her own eyes on the 'Royal Oak' kitchen table. She must not allow her mind to dwell upon it. Now Wynn was dead, and everything connected with him was lumping and rustling and tinkling under her busy poker into red black dust and grey leaves of ash. The thing beneath the oak would die too. Mary had seen death more than once. She came of a family that had a knack of dying under, as she told Miss Fowler, 'most distressing circumstances.' She would stay where she was till she was entirely satisfied that It was dead—dead as dear papa in the late 'eighties; aunt Mary in 'eighty-

nine; mamma in 'ninety-one; cousin Dick in 'ninety-five; Lady McCausland's housemaid in 'ninety-nine; Lady McCausland's sister in nineteen hundred and one; Wynn buried five days ago; and Edna Gerritt still waiting for decent earth to hide her. As she thought—her underlip caught up by one faded canine, brows knit and nostrils wide—she wielded the poker with lunges that jarred the grating at the bottom, and careful scrapes round the brick-work above. She looked at her wrist-watch. It was getting on to half-past four, and the rain was coming down in earnest. Tea would be at five. If It did not die before that time, she would be soaked and would have to change. Meantime, and this occupied her, Wynn's things were burning well in spite of the hissing wet, though now and again a book-back with a quite distinguishable title would be heaved up out of the mass. The exercise of stoking had given her a glow which seemed to reach to the marrow of her bones. She hummed—Mary never had a voice—to herself. She had never believed in all those advanced views—though Miss Fowler herself leaned a little that way—of woman's work in the world; but now she saw there was much to be said for them. This, for instance, was *her* work—work which no man, least of all Dr. Hennis, would ever have done. A man, at such a crisis, would be what Wynn called a 'sportsman'; would leave everything to fetch help, and would certainly bring It into the house. Now a woman's business was to make a happy home for —for a husband and children. Failing these—it was not a thing one should allow one's mind to dwell upon—but——

'Stop it!' Mary cried once more across the shadows. 'Nein, I tell you! Ich haben der todt Kinder gesehn.'

But it was a fact. A woman who had missed these things could still be useful—more useful than a man in certain respects. She thumped like a pavior through the settling ashes at the secret thrill of it. The rain was damping the fire, but she could feel—it was too dark to see—that her work was done. There was a dull red glow at the bottom of the destructor, not enough to char the wooden lid if she slipped it half over against the driving wet. This arranged, she leaned on the poker and waited, while an increasing rapture laid hold on her. She ceased to think. She gave herself up to feel. Her long pleasure was broken by a sound that she had waited for in agony several times in her life. She leaned forward and listened, smiling. There could be no mistake. She closed her eyes and drank it in. Once it ceased abruptly.

'Go on,' she murmured, half aloud. 'That isn't the end.'

Then the end came very distinctly in a lull between two rain-gusts. Mary Postgate drew her breath short between her teeth and shivered from head to foot. '*That's* all right,' said she contentedly, and went up to the house, where she scandalised the whole routine by taking a luxurious hot bath before tea, and came down looking, as Miss Fowler said when she saw her lying all relaxed on the other sofa, 'quite handsome!'

THE BEGINNINGS

It was not part of their blood,
  It came to them very late
With long arrears to make good,
  When the English began to hate.

They were not easily moved,
  They were icy willing to wait
Till every count should be proved,
  Ere the English began to hate.

Their voices were even and low,
  Their eyes were level and straight.
There was neither sign nor show,
  When the English began to hate.

It was not preached to the crowd,
  It was not taught by the State.
No man spoke it aloud,
  When the English began to hate.

It was not suddenly bred,
  It will not swiftly abate,
Through the chill years ahead,
  When Time shall count from the date
  That the English began to hate.

LETTERS OF TRAVEL

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FROM TIDEWAY TO TIDEWAY
1892-95

In Sight of Monadnock
Across a Continent
The Edge of the East
Our Overseas Men
Some Earthquakes
Half-a-Dozen Pictures
"Captains Courageous"
On One Side Only
Leaves from a Winter Note-Book

IN SIGHT OF MONADNOCK

AFTER the gloom of gray Atlantic weather, our ship came to America in a flood of winter sunshine that made unaccustomed eyelids blink, and the New Yorker, who is nothing if not modest, said, 'This isn't a sample of our really fine days; wait until such and such times come, or go to such and such a quarter of the city.' We were content, and more than content, to drift aimlessly up and down the brilliant streets, wondering a little why the finest light should be wasted on the worst pavements in the world; to walk round and round Madison Square, because that was full of beautifully dressed babies playing counting-out games, or to gaze reverently at the broad-shouldered, pug-nosed Irish New York policemen. Wherever we went there was the sun, lavish and unstinted, working nine hours a day, with the colour and the clean-cut lines of perspective that he makes. That any one should dare to call this climate muggy, yea, even 'sub-tropical,' was a shock. There came such a man, and he said, 'Go north if you want weather—weather that *is* weather. Go to New England.'

So New York passed away upon a sunny afternoon, with her roar and rattle, her complex smells, her triply over-heated rooms, and much too energetic inhabitants, while the train went north to the lands where the snow lay. It came in one sweep—almost, it seemed, in one

turn of the wheels—covering the winter-killed grass and turning the frozen ponds that looked so white under the shadow of lean trees, into pools of ink.

As the light closed in, a little wooden town, white, cloaked, and dumb, slid past the windows, and the strong light of the car lamps fell upon a sleigh (the driver furred and muffled to his nose) turning the corner of a street. Now the sleigh of a picture-book, however well one knows it, is altogether different from the thing in real life, a means of conveyance at a journey's end; but it is well not to be over-curious in the matter, for the same American who has been telling you at length how he once followed a kilted Scots soldier from Chelsea to the Tower, out of pure wonder and curiosity at his bare knees and sporran, will laugh at your interest in 'just a cutter.'

The staff of the train—surely the great American nation would be lost if deprived of the ennobling society of brakeman, conductor, Pullman-car conductor, negro porter, and newsboy—told pleasant tales, as they spread themselves at ease in the smoking compartments, of snowings up the line to Montreal, of desperate attacks—four engines together and a snow-plough in front—on drifts thirty feet high, and the pleasures of walking along the tops of goods waggons to brake a train, with the thermometer thirty below freezing. 'It comes cheaper to kill men that way than to put air-brakes on freight cars,' said the brakeman.

Thirty below freezing! It was inconceivable till one stepped out into it at midnight, and the first shock of that clear, still air took away the breath as a plunge into sea-water does. A walrus sitting on a woolpack was our host in his sleigh, and he wrapped us in hairy

goatskin coats, caps that came down over the ears, buffalo robes and blankets, and yet more buffalo robes till we, too, looked like walruses and moved almost as gracefully. The night was as keen as the edge of a newly-ground sword; breath froze on the coat lapels in snow; the nose became without sensation, and the eyes wept bitterly because the horses were in a hurry to get home; and whirling through air at zero brings tears. But for the jingle of the sleigh-bells the ride might have taken place in a dream, for there was no sound of hoofs upon the snow, the runners sighed a little now and again as they glided over an inequality, and all the sheeted hills round about were as dumb as death. Only the Connecticut River kept up its heart and a lane of black water through the packed ice; we could hear the stream worrying round the heels of its small bergs. Elsewhere there was nothing but snow under the moon—snow drifted to the level of the stone fences or curling over their tops in a lip of frosted silver; snow banked high on either side of the road, or lying heavy on the pines and the hemlocks in the woods, where the air seemed, by comparison, as warm as a conservatory. It was beautiful beyond expression, nature's boldest sketch in black and white, done with a Japanese disregard of perspective, and daringly altered from time to time by the restless pencils of the moon.

In the morning the other side of the picture was revealed in the colours of the sunlight. There was never a cloud in the sky that rested on the snow-line of the horizon as a sapphire on white velvet. Hills of pure white, or speckled and furred with woods, rose up above the solid white levels of the fields, and the sun

rioted over their embroideries till the eyes ached. Here and there on the exposed slopes, the day's warmth—the thermometer was nearly forty degrees—and the night's cold had made a bald and shining crust upon the snow; but the most part was soft powdered stuff, ready to catch the light on a thousand crystals and multiply it sevenfold. Through this magnificence, and thinking nothing of it, a wood-sledge drawn by two shaggy red steers, the unbarked logs diamond-dusted with snow, shouldered down the road in a cloud of frosty breath. It is the mark of inexperience in this section of the country to confound a sleigh which you use for riding with the sledge that is devoted to heavy work; and it is, I believe, a still greater sign of worthlessness to think that oxen are driven, as they are in most places, by scientific twisting of the tail. The driver with red mittens on his hands, felt overstockings that come up to his knees, and, perhaps, a silvery gray coon-skin coat on his back, walks beside, crying, 'Gee, haw!' even as is written in American stories. And the speech of the driver explains many things in regard to the dialect story, which at its best is an infliction to many. Now that I have heard the long, unhurried drawl of Vermont, my wonder is, not that the New England tales should be printed in what, for the sake of argument, we will call English and its type but rather that they should not have appeared in Swedish or Russian. Our alphabet is too limited. This part of the country belongs by laws unknown to the United States, but which obtain all the world over, to the New England story and the ladies who write it. You feel this in the air as soon as you see the white-painted wooden houses left out in the snow, the austere schoolhouse, and the people—the men

of the farms, the women who work as hard as they with, it may be, less enjoyment of life—the other houses, well painted and quaintly roofed, that belong to Judge This, Lawyer That, and Banker Such an one; all powers in the metropolis of six thousand folk over there by the railway station. More acutely still, do you realize the atmosphere when you read in the local paper announcements of 'chicken suppers' and 'church sociables' to be given by such and such a denomination, sandwiched between paragraphs of genial and friendly interest, showing that the countryside live (and without slaying each other) on terms of terrifying intimacy.

The folk of the old rock, the dwellers in the older houses, born and raised hereabouts, would not live out of the town for any consideration, and there are insane people from the South—men and women from Boston and the like—who actually build houses out in the open country, two, and even three miles from Main Street which is nearly 400 yards long, and the centre of life and population. With the strangers, more particularly if they do not buy their groceries 'in the street,' which means, and is, the town, the town has little to do; but it knows everything, and much more also, that goes on among them. Their dresses, their cattle, their views, the manners of their children, their manner towards their servants, and every other conceivable thing, is reported, digested, discussed, and rediscussed up and down Main Street. Now, the wisdom of Vermont, not being at all times equal to grasping all the problems of everybody else's life with delicacy, sometimes makes pathetic mistakes, and the town is set by the ears. You will see, therefore, that towns of a certain size do not differ materially all the world over. The talk of the

men of the farms is of their farms—purchase, mortgage, and sale, recorded rights, boundary lines, and road-tax. It was in the middle of New Zealand, on the edge of the Wild Horse Plains, that I heard this talk last, when a man and his wife, twenty miles from the nearest neighbour, sat up half the night discussing just the same things that the men talked of in Main Street, Vermont, U. S. A.

There is one man in the State who is much exercised over this place. He is a farm-hand, raised in a hamlet fifteen or twenty miles from the nearest railway, and, greatly daring, he has wandered here. The bustle and turmoil of Main Street, the new glare of the electric lights and the five-storeyed brick business block, frighten and distress him much. He has taken service on a farm well away from these delirious delights, and, says he, 'I've been offered $25 a month to work in a bakery at New York. But you don't get me to no New York. I've seen this place an' it just scares me.' His strength is in the drawing of hay and the feeding of cattle. Winter life on a farm does not mean the comparative idleness that is so much written of. Each hour seems to have its sixty minutes of work; for the cattle are housed and eat eternally; the colts must be turned out for their drink, and the ice broken for them if necessary; then ice must be stored for the summer use, and then the real work of hauling logs for fire-wood begins. New England depends for its fuel on the woods. The trees are 'blazed' in the autumn just before the fall of the leaf, felled later, cut into four-foot lengths, and, as soon as the friendly snow makes sledging possible, drawn to the wood-house. Afterwards the needs of the farm can be attended to, and a farm, like an arch, is never at

rest. A little later will come maple-sugar time, when the stately maples are tapped as the sap begins to stir, and beringed with absurd little buckets (a cow being milked into a thimble gives some idea of the disproportion), which are emptied into cauldrons. Afterwards (this is the time of the 'sugaring-off parties') you pour the boiled syrup into tins full of fresh snow, where it hardens, and you pretend to help and become very sticky and make love, boys and girls together. Even the introduction of patent sugar evaporators has not spoiled the love-making.

There is a certain scarcity of men to make love with; not so much in towns which have their own manufactories and lie within a lover's Sabbath-day journey of New York, but in the farms and villages. The men have gone away—the young men are fighting fortune further West, and the women remain—remain for ever as women must. On the farms, when the children depart, the old man and the old woman strive to hold things together without help, and the woman's portion is work and monotony. Sometimes she goes mad to an extent which appreciably affects statistics and is put down in census reports. More often, let us hope, she dies. In the villages where the necessity for heavy work is not so urgent the women find consolation in the formation of literary clubs and circles, and so gather to themselves a great deal of wisdom in their own way. That way is not altogether lovely. They desire facts and the knowledge that they are at a certain page in a German or an Italian book before a certain time, or that they have read the proper books in a proper way. At any rate, they have something to do that seems as if they were doing something. It has been said that the

New England stories are cramped and narrow. Even a far-off view of the iron-bound life whence they are drawn justifies the author. You can carve a nut in a thousand different ways by reason of the hardness of the shell.

Twenty or thirty miles across the hills, on the way to the Green Mountains, lie some finished chapters of pitiful stories—a few score abandoned farms, started in a lean land, held fiercely so long as there was any one to work them, and then left on the hill-sides. Beyond this desolation are woods where the bear and the deer still find peace, and sometimes even the beaver forgets that he is persecuted and dares to build his lodge. These things were told me by a man who loved the woods for their own sake and not for the sake of slaughter—a quiet, slow-spoken man of the West, who came across the drifts on snow-shoes and refrained from laughing when I borrowed his foot-gear and tried to walk. The gigantic lawn-tennis bats strung with hide are not easy to manœuvre. If you forget to keep the long heels down and trailing in the snow you turn over and become as a man who falls into deep water with a life-belt tied to his ankles. If you lose your balance, do not attempt to recover it, but drop, half-sitting and half-kneeling, over as large an area as possible. When you have mastered the wolf-step, can slide one shoe above the other deftly, that is to say, the sensation of paddling over a ten-foot deep drift and taking short cuts by buried fences is worth the ankle-ache. The man from the West interpreted to me the signs on the snow, showed how a fox (this section of the country is full of foxes, and men shoot them because riding is impossible) leaves one kind of spoor, walking

with circumspection as becomes a thief, and a dog, who has nothing to be ashamed of, but widens his four legs and plunges, another; how coons go to sleep for the winter and squirrels too, and how the deer on the Canada border trample down deep paths that are called yards and are caught there by inquisitive men with cameras, who hold them by their tails when the deer have blundered into deep snow, and so photograph their frightened dignity. He told me of people also—the manners and customs of New Englanders here, and how they blossom and develop in the Far West on the newer railway-lines, when matters come very nearly to civil war between rival companies racing for the same cañon; how there is a country not very far away called Caledonia, populated by the Scotch, who can give points to a New Englander in a bargain, and how these same Scotch-Americans by birth, name their townships still after the cities of their thrifty race. It was all as new and delightful as the steady 'scrunch' of the snow-shoes and the dazzling silence of the hills.

Beyond the very furthest range, where the pines turn to a faint blue haze against the one solitary peak—a real mountain and not a hill—showed like a gigantic thumbnail pointing heavenward.

'And that's Monadnock,' said the man from the West; 'all the hills have Indian names. You left Wantastiquet on your right coming out of town.'

You know how it often happens that a word shuttles in and out of many years, waking all sorts of incongruous associations. I had met Monadnock on paper in a shameless parody of Emerson's style, before ever style

or verse had interest for me. But the word stuck because of a rhyme, in which one was

> . . . crowned coeval
> With Monadnock's crest,
> And my wings extended
> Touch the East and West.

Later the same word, pursued on the same principle as that blessed one Mesopotamia, led me to and through Emerson, up to his poem on the peak itself—the wise old giant 'busy with his sky affairs,' who makes us sane and sober and free from little things if we trust him. So Monadnock came to mean everything that was helpful, healing, and full of quiet, and when I saw him half across New Hampshire he did not fail. In that utter stillness a hemlock bough, overweighted with snow, came down a foot or two with a tired little sigh; the snow slid off and the little branch flew nodding back to its fellows.

For the honour of Monadnock there was made that afternoon an image of snow of Gautama Buddha, something too squat and not altogether equal on both sides, but with an imperial and reposeful waist. He faced towards the mountain, and presently some men in a wood-sledge came up the road and faced him. Now, the amazed comments of two Vermont farmers on the nature and properties of a swag-bellied god are worth hearing. They were not troubled about his race, for he was aggressively white; but rounded waists seem to be out of fashion in Vermont. At least, they said so, with rare and curious oaths.

Next day all the idleness and trifling were drowned

in a snowstorm that filled the hollows of the hills with whirling blue mist, bowed the branches of the woods till you ducked, but were powdered all the same when you drove through, and wiped out the sleighing tracks. Mother nature is beautifully tidy if you leave her alone. She rounded off every angle, broke down every scarp, and tucked the white bedclothes, till not a wrinkle remained, up to the chins of the spruces and the hemlocks that would not go to sleep.

'Now,' said the man of the West, as we were driving to the station, and alas! to New York, 'all my snow-tracks are gone; but when that snow melts, a week hence or a month hence, they'll all come up again and show where I've been.'

Curious idea, is it not? Imagine a murder committed in the lonely woods, a snowstorm that covers the tracks of the flying man before the avenger of blood has buried the body, and then, a week later, the withdrawal of the traitorous snow, revealing step by step the path Cain took—the six-inch dee-trail of his snow-shoes—each step a dark disk on the white till the very end.

There is so much, so very much to write, if it were worth while about that queer little town by the railway station, with its life running, to all outward seeming, as smoothly as the hack-coupés on their sleigh mounting, and within disturbed by the hatreds and troubles and jealousies that vex the minds of all but the gods. For instance—no, it is better to remember the lesson Monadnock, and Emerson has said, 'Zeus hates busy-bodies and people who do too much.'

That there are such folk, a long nasal drawl across

Main Street attests. A farmer is unhitching his horses from a post opposite a store. He stands with the tie-rope in his hand and gives his opinion to his neighbour and the world generally—'But them there Andersons, they ain't got no notion of etikwette!'

ACROSS A CONTINENT

IT IS not easy to escape from a big city. An entire continent was waiting to be traversed, and, for that reason, we lingered in New York till the city felt so homelike that it seemed wrong to leave it. And further, the more one studied it, the more grotesquely bad it grew—bad in its paving, bad in its streets, bad in its street-police, and but for the kindness of the tides would be worse than bad in its sanitary arrangements. No one as yet has approached the management of New York in a proper spirit; that is to say, regarding it as the shiftless outcome of squalid barbarism and reckless extravagance. No one is likely to do so, because reflections on the long, narrow pig-trough are construed as malevolent attacks against the spirit and majesty of the Great American People, and lead to angry comparisons. Yet, if all the streets of London were permanently up and all the lamps permanently down, this would not prevent the New York streets taken in a lump from being first cousins to a Zanzibar foreshore, or kin to the approaches of a Zulu kraal. Gullies, holes, ruts, cobble-stones awry, kerbstones rising from two to six inches above the level of the slatternly pavement; tram-lines from two to three inches above street levels; building materials scattered half across the street; lime, boards, cut stone, and ash barrels generally and generously everywhere; wheeled traffic taking its chances,

dray *versus* brougham, at cross roads; sway-backed poles whittled and unpainted; drunken lamp-posts with twisted irons; and, lastly, a generous scatter of filth and more mixed stinks than the winter wind can carry away, are matters which can be considered quite apart from the 'Spirit of Democracy' or 'the future of this great and growing country.' In any other land they would be held to represent slovenliness, sordidness, and want of capacity. Here it is explained, not once but many times, that they show the speed at which the city has grown and the enviable indifference of her citizens to matters of detail. One of these days, you are told, everything will be taken in hand and put straight. The unvirtuous rulers of the city will be swept away by a cyclone, or a tornado, or something big and booming, of popular indignation; everybody will unanimously elect the right man, who will justly earn the enormous salaries that are at present being paid to inadequate aliens for road sweepings, and all will be well. At the same time the lawlessness ingrained by governors among the governed during the last thirty, forty, or it may be fifty years; the brutal levity of the public conscience in regard to public duty; the toughening and suppling of public morals, and the reckless disregard for human life, bred by impotent laws and fostered by familiarity with needless accidents and criminal neglect, will miraculously disappear. If the laws of cause and effect that control even the freest people in the world say otherwise, so much the worse for the laws. America makes her own. Behind her stands the ghost of the most bloody war of the century caused in a peaceful land by long temporising with lawlessness, by letting things slide, by shiftlessness and blind dis-

regard for all save the material need of the hour, till the hour, long conceived and let alone, stood up full armed, and men said, "Here is an unforeseen crisis," and killed each other in the name of God for four years.

In a heathen land the three things that are supposed to be the pillars of moderately decent government are regard for human life, justice criminal and civil, as far as it lies in man to do justice, and good roads. In this Christian city they think lightly of the first—their own papers, their own speech, and their own actions prove it; buy and sell the second at a price openly and without shame; and are, apparently, content to do without the third. One would almost expect racial sense of humour would stay them from expecting only praise—slab, lavish, and slavish—from the stranger within their gates. But they do not. If he holds his peace, they forge tributes to their own excellence which they put into his mouth, thereby treating their own land which they profess to honour as a quack treats his pills. If he speaks—but you shall see for yourselves what happens then. And they cannot see that by untruth and invective it is themselves alone that they injure.

The blame of their city evils is not altogether with the gentlemen, chiefly of foreign extraction, who control the city. These find a people made to their hand—a lawless breed ready to wink at one evasion of the law if they themselves may profit by another, and in their rare leisure hours content to smile over the details of a clever fraud. Then, says the cultured American, 'Give us time. Give us time, and we shall arrive.' The otherwise American, who is aggressive, straightway proceeds to thrust a piece of half-hanged municipal botch-work under the nose of the alien as a sample of

perfected effort. There is nothing more delightful than to sit for a strictly limited time with a child who tells you what he means to do when he is a man; but when that same child, loud-voiced, insistent, unblushingly eager for praise, but thin-skinned as the most morbid of hobbledehoys, stands about all your ways telling you the same story in the same voice, you begin to yearn for something made and finished—say Egypt and a completely dead mummy. It is neither seemly nor safe to hint that the government of the largest city in the States is a despotism of the alien by the alien for the alien, tempered with occasional insurrections of the decent folk. Only the Chinaman washes the dirty linen of other lands.

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA.

Yes, it is very good to get away once more and pick up the old and ever fresh business of the vagrant, loafing through new towns, learned in the manners of dogs, babies, and perambulators half the world over, and tracking the seasons by the up-growth of flowers in stranger-people's gardens. St. Paul, standing at the barn-door of the Dakota and Minnesota granaries, is all things to all men except to Minneapolis, eleven miles away, whom she hates and by whom she is patronised.

She calls herself the capital of the North-West, the new North-West, and her citizens wear, not only the tall silk hat of trade, but the soft slouch of the West. She talks in another tongue than the New Yorker, and—sure sign that we are far across the Continent—her papers argue with the San Francisco ones over rate wars and the competition of railway companies. St. Paul has been established many years, and if one were reck-

less enough to go down to the business quarters one would hear all about her and more also. But the residential parts of the town are the crown of it, in common with scores of other cities; broad-crowned suburbs—using the word in the English sense—that make the stranger jealous. You get here what you do not get in the city—well-paved or asphalted roads, planted with trees, and trim side-walks, studded with houses of individuality, not boorishly fenced off from each other, but standing each on its plot of well-kept turf running down to the pavement. It is always Sunday in these streets of a morning. The cable-car has taken the men down town to business, the children are at school, and the big dogs, three and a third to each absent child, lie nosing the winter-killed grass and wondering when the shoots will make it possible for a gentleman to take his spring medicine. In the afternoon, the children on tricycles stagger up and down the asphalt with due proportion of big dogs at each wheel; the cable-cars coming up hill begin to drop the men each at his own door—the door of the house that he builded for himself (though the architect incited him to that vile little attic tower and useless loggia), and, naturally enough, twilight brings the lovers walking two by two along the very quiet ways. You can tell from the houses almost the exact period at which they were built, whether in the jig-saw days, when it behoved respectability to use unlovely turned rails and pierced gable-ends, or during the Colonial craze, which means white paint and fluted pillars, or in the latest domestic era, a most pleasant mixture, that is, of stained shingles, hooded dormer windows, cunning verandahs, and recessed doors. Seeing these things, one begins to

understand why the Americans visiting England are impressed with the old and not with the new. He is not much more than a hundred years ahead of the English in design, comfort, and economy, and (this is most important) labour-saving appliances in his house. From Newport to San Diego you will find the same thing to-day.

Last tribute of respect and admiration. One little brown house at the end of an avenue is shuttered down, and a doctor's buggy stands before it. On the door a large blue and white label says—'Scarlet Fever.' Oh, most excellent municipality of St. Paul! It is because of these little things, and not rowdying and racketing in public places, that a nation becomes great and free and honoured. In the cars to-night they will be talking wheat, girding at Minneapolis, and sneering at Duluth's demand for twenty feet of water from Duluth to the Atlantic—matters of no great moment compared with those streets and that label.

A Day later.

'Five days ago there wasn't a foot of earth to see. It was just naturally covered with snow,' says the conductor standing in the rear car of the Great Northern train. He speaks as though the snow had hidden something priceless. Here is the view: One railway track and a line of staggering telegraph-poles ending in a dot and a blur on the horizon. To the left and right, a sweep as it were of the sea, one huge plain of corn-land waiting for the spring, dotted at rare intervals with wooden farmhouses, patent self-reapers and binders almost as big as the houses, ricks left over from last year's abundant harvest, and mottled here and there

with black patches to show that the early ploughing had begun. The snow lies in a last few streaks and whirls by the track; from skyline to skyline is black loam and prairie grass so dead that it seems as though no one year's sun would waken it. This is the granary of the land where the farmer who bears the burdens of the State—and who, therefore, ascribes last year's bumper crop to the direct action of the M'Kinley Bill—has, also, to bear the ghastly monotony of earth and sky. He keeps his head, having many things to attend to, but his wife sometimes goes mad as the women do in Vermont. There is little variety in Nature's big wheatfield. They say that when the corn is in the ear the wind, chasing shadows across it for miles on miles, breeds as it were a vertigo in those who must look and cannot turn their eyes away. And they tell a nightmare story of a woman who lived with her husband for fourteen years at an army post in just such a land as this. Then they were transferred to West Point, among the hills over the Hudson, and she came to New York, but the terror of the tall houses grew upon her and grew till she went down with brain-fever, and the dread of her delirium was that the terrible things would topple down and crush her. That is a true story.

They work for harvest with steam-ploughs here. How could mere horses face the endless furrows? And they attack the earth with tooth-cogged and spiked engines that would be monstrous in the shops, but here are only speckles on the yellow grass. Even the locomotive is cowed. A train of freight cars is passing along a line that comes out of the blue and goes on till it meets the blue again. Elsewhere the train would

move off with a joyous, vibrant roar. Here it steals away down the vista of the telegraph-poles with an awed whisper—steals away and sinks into the soil.

Then comes a town deep in black mud—a straggly, inch-thick plank town, with dull red grain elevators. The open country refuses to be subdued even for a few score rods. Each street ends in the illimitable open, and it is as though the whole houseless, outside earth were racing through it. Towards evening, under a gray sky, flies by an unframed picture of desolation. In the foreground a farm waggon almost axle deep in mud, the mire dripping from the slow turning wheels as the man flogs the horses. Behind him on a knoll of sodden soggy grass, fenced off by raw rails from the landscape at large, are a knot of utterly uninterested citizens who have flogged horses and raised wheat in their time, but to-day lie under chipped and weather-worn wooden head-stones. Surely burial here must be more awful to the newly made ghost than burial at sea!

There is more snow as we go north, and Nature is hard at work breaking up the ground for the spring. The thaw has filled every depression with a sullen gray-black spate, and out on the levels the water lies six inches deep, in stretch upon stretch, as far as the eye can reach. Every culvert is full, and the broken ice clicks against the wooden pier-guards of the bridges. Somewhere in this flatness there is a refreshing jingle of spurs along the cars, and a man of the Canadian Mounted Police swaggers through with his black fur cap and yellow tab aside, his well-fitting overalls and his better set-up back. One wants to shake hands with him because he is clean and does not slouch nor spit, trims his hair, and walks as a man should. Then a

custom-house officer wants to know too much about cigars, whisky, and Florida water. Her Majesty, the Queen of England and Empress of India has us in her keeping. Nothing has happened to the landscape, and Winnipeg, which is, as it were, a centre of distribution for emigrants, stands up to her knees in the water of the thaw. The year has turned in earnest, and somebody is talking about the 'first ice-shove' at Montreal, 1300 or 1400 miles east.

They will not run trains on Sunday at Montreal, and this is Wednesday. Therefore, the Canadian Pacific makes up a train for Vancouver at Winnipeg. This is worth remembering, because few people travel in that train, and you escape any rush of tourists running westward to catch the Yokohama boat. The car is your own, and with it the service of the porter. Our porter, seeing things were slack, beguiled himself with a guitar, which gave a triumphal and festive touch to the journey ridiculously out of keeping with the view. For eight-and-twenty long hours did the bored locomotive trail us through a flat and hairy land, powdered, ribbed and speckled with snow, small snow that drives like dust shot in the wind—the land of Assiniboia. Now and again, for no obvious reason to the outside mind, there was a town. Then the towns gave place to 'section so and so'; then there were trails of the buffalo, where he once walked in his pride; then there was a mound of white bones, supposed to belong to the said buffalo, and then the wilderness took up the tale. Some of it was good ground, but most of it seemed to have fallen by the wayside, and the tedium of it was eternal.

At twilight—an unearthly sort of twilight—there came another curious picture. Thus—a wooden town

shut in among low, treeless, rolling ground, a calling river that ran unseen between scarped banks; barracks of a detachment of mounted police, a little cemetery where ex-troopers rested, a painfully formal public garden with pebble paths and foot-high fir trees, a few lines of railway buildings, white women walking up and down in the bitter cold with their bonnets off, some Indians in red blanketing with buffalo horns for sale trailing along the platform, and, not ten yards from the track, a cinnamon bear and a young grizzly standing up with extended arms in their pens and begging for food. It was strange beyond anything that this bald telling can suggest—opening a door into a new world. The only commonplace thing about the spot was its name—Medicine Hat, which struck me instantly as the only possible name such a town could carry. This is that place which later became a town; but I had seen it three years before when it was even smaller and was reached by me in a freight-car, ticket unpaid for.

That next morning brought us the Canadian Pacific Railway as one reads about it. No pen of man could do justice to the scenery there. The guide-books struggle desperately with descriptions adapted for summer reading of rushing cascades, lichened rocks, waving pines, and snow-capped mountains; but in April these things are not there. The place is locked up—dead as a frozen corpse. The mountain torrent is a boss of palest emerald ice against the dazzle of the snow; the pine-stumps are capped and hooded with gigantic mushrooms of snow; the rocks are overlaid five feet deep; the rocks, the fallen trees, and the lichens together, and the dumb white lips curl up to the track cut in the side of the mountain, and grin there fanged with gigantic

icicles. You may listen in vain when the train stops for the least sign of breath or power among the hills. The snow has smothered the rivers, and the great looping trestles run over what might be a lather of suds in a huge washtub. The old snow near by is blackened and smirched with the smoke of locomotives, and its dullness is grateful to aching eyes. But the men who live upon the line have no consideration for these things. At a halting-place in a gigantic gorge walled in by the snows, one of them reels from a tiny saloon into the middle of the track where half-a-dozen dogs are chasing a pig off the metals. He is beautifully and eloquently drunk. He sings, waves his hands, and collapses behind a shunting engine, while four of the loveliest peaks that the Almighty ever moulded look down upon him. The landslide that should have wiped that saloon into kindlings has missed its mark and has struck a few miles down the line. One of the hillsides moved a little in dreaming of the spring and caught a passing freight train. Our cars grind cautiously by, for the wrecking engine has only just come through. The deceased engine is standing on its head in soft earth thirty or forty feet down the slide, and two long cars loaded with shingles are dropped carelessly atop of it. It looks so marvelously like a toy train flung aside by a child, that one cannot realise what it means till a voice cries, 'Any one killed?' The answer comes back, 'No; all jumped'; and you perceive with a sense of personal insult that this slovenliness of the mountain is an affair which may touch your own sacred self. In which case . . . but the train is out on a trestle, into a tunnel, and out on a trestle again. It was here that every one began to despair of the line when it was under

construction, because there seemed to be no outlet. But a man came, as a man always will, and put a descent thus and a curve in this manner, and a trestle so; and behold, the line went on. It is in this place that we heard the story of the Canadian Pacific Railway told as men tell a many times repeated tale, with exaggerations and omissions, but an imposing tale, none the less. In the beginning, when they would federate the Dominion of Canada, it was British Columbia who saw objections to coming in, and the Prime Minister of those days promised it for a bribe, an iron band between tidewater and tidewater that should not break. Then everybody laughed, which seems necessary to the health of most big enterprises, and while they were laughing, things were being done. The Canadian Pacific Railway was given a bit of a line here and a bit of a line there and almost as much land as it wanted, and the laughter was still going on when the last spike was driven between east and west, at the very place where the drunken man sprawled behind the engine, and the iron band ran from tideway to tideway as the Premier said, and people in England said 'How interesting,' and proceeded to talk about the 'bloated Army estimates.' Incidentally, the man who told us—he had nothing to do with the Canadian Pacific Railway—explained how it paid the line to encourage immigration, and told of the arrival at Winnipeg of a train-load of Scotch crofters on a Sunday. They wanted to stop then and there for the Sabbath—they and all the little stock they had brought with them. It was the Winnipeg agent who had to go among them arguing (he was Scotch too, and they could not quite understand it) on the impropriety of dislocating the company's traffic. So their own

minister held a service in the station, and the agent gave them a good dinner, cheering them in Gaelic, at which they wept, and they went on to settle at Moosomin, where they lived happily ever afterwards. Of the manager, the head of the line from Montreal to Vancouver, our companion spoke with reverence that was almost awe. That manager lived in a palace at Montreal, but from time to time he would sally forth in his special car and whirl over his 3000 miles at 50 miles an hour. The regulation pace is twenty-two, but he sells his neck with his head. Few drivers cared for the honour of taking him over the road. A mysterious man he was, who 'carried the profile of the line in his head,' and, more than that, knew intimately the possibilities of back country which he had never seen nor travelled over. There is always one such man on every line. You can hear similar tales from drivers on the Great Western in England or Eurasian stationmasters on the big North-Western in India. Then a fellow-traveller spoke, as many others had done, on the possibilities of Canadian union with the United States; and his language was not the language of Mr. Goldwin Smith. It was brutal in places. Summarised it came to a pronounced objection to having anything to do with a land rotten before it was ripe, a land with seven million negroes as yet unwelded into the population, their race-type unevolved, and rather more than crude notions on murder, marriage, and honesty. 'We've picked up their way of politics,' he said mournfully. 'That comes of living next door to them; but I don't think we're anxious to mix up with their other messes. They say they don't want us. They keep on saying it. There's a nigger on the fence somewhere, or they wouldn't lie about it.'

'But does it follow that they are lying?'

'Sure. I've lived among 'em. They can't go straight. There's some dam' fraud at the back of it.'

From this belief he would not be shaken. He had lived among them—perhaps had been bested in trade. Let them keep themselves and their manners and customs to their own side of the line.

This is very sad and chilling. It seemed quite otherwise in New York, where Canada was represented as a ripe plum ready to fall into Uncle Sam's mouth when he should open it. The Canadian has no special love for England—the Mother of Colonies has a wonderful gift for alienating the affections of her own household by neglect—but, perhaps, he loves his own country. We ran out of the snow through mile upon mile of snow-sheds, braced with twelve-inch beams, and planked with two-inch planking. In one place a snow slide had caught just the edge of a shed and scooped it away as a knife scoops cheese. High up the hills men had built diverting barriers to turn the drifts, but the drifts had swept over everything, and lay five deep on the top of the sheds. When we woke it was on the banks of the muddy Fraser River and the spring was hurrying to meet us. The snow had gone; the pink blossoms of the wild currant were open, the budding alders stood misty green against the blue black of the pines, the brambles on the burnt stumps were in tenderest leaf, and every moss on every stone was this year's work, fresh from the hand of the Maker. The land opened into clearings of soft black earth. At one station a hen had laid an egg and was telling the world about it. The world answered with a breath of real spring—spring that flooded the stuffy car and drove us out on the platform to snuff and

sing and rejoice and pluck squashy green marsh-flags and throw them at the colts, and shout at the wild duck that rose from a jewel-green lakelet. God be thanked that in travel one can follow the year! This, my spring, I lost last November in New Zealand. Now I shall hold her fast through Japan and the summer into New Zealand again.

Here are the waters of the Pacific, and Vancouver (completely destitute of any decent defences) grown out of all knowledge in the last three years. At the railway wharf, with never a gun to protect her, lies the *Empress of India*—the Japan boat—and what more auspicious name could you wish to find at the end of one of the strong chains of empire?

THE EDGE OF THE EAST

THE mist was clearing off Yokohama harbour and a hundred junks had their sails hoisted for the morning breeze, so that the veiled horizon was stippled with square blurs of silver. An English man-of-war showed blue-white on the haze, so new was the daylight, and all the water lay out as smooth as the inside of an oyster shell. Two children in blue and white, their tanned limbs pink in the fresh air, sculled a marvellous boat of lemon-hued wood, and that was our fairy craft to the shore across the stillness and the mother o' pearl levels.

There are ways and ways of entering Japan. The best is to descend upon it from America and the Pacific —from the barbarians and the deep sea. Coming from the East, the blaze of India and the insolent tropical vegetation of Singapore dull the eye to half-colours and little tones. It is at Bombay that the smell of All Asia boards the ship miles off shore, and holds the passenger's nose till he is clear of Asia again. That is a violent and aggressive smell, apt to prejudice the stranger, but kin none the less to the gentle and insinuating flavour that stole across the light airs of the daybreak when the fairy boat went to shore—a smell of very clean new wood; split bamboo, wood-smoke, damp earth, and the things that people who are not white people eat—a homelike and comforting smell. Then followed on

shore the sound of an Eastern tongue, that is beautiful or not as you happen to know it. The Western races have many languages, but a crowd of Europeans heard through closed doors talk with the Western pitch and cadence. So it is with the East. A line of jinrickshaw coolies sat in the sun discoursing to each other, and it was as though they were welcoming a return in speech that the listener must know as well as English. They talked and they talked, but the ghosts of familiar words would not grow any clearer till presently the Smell came down the open streets again, saying that this was the East where nothing matters, and trifles old as the Tower of Babel mattered less than nothing, and that there were old acquaintances waiting at every corner beyond the township. Great is the Smell of the East! Railways, telegraphs, docks, and gun-boats cannot banish it, and it will endure till the railways are dead. He who has not smelt that smell has never lived.

Three years ago Yokohama was sufficiently Europeanised in its shops to suit the worst and wickedest taste. To-day it is still worse if you keep to the town limits. Ten steps beyond into the fields all the civilisation stops exactly as it does in another land a few thousand miles further West. The globe-trotting millionaires, anxious to spend money, with a nose on whatever caught their libertine fancies, had explained to us aboard-ship that they came to Japan in haste, advised by their guide-books to do so, lest the land should be suddenly civilised between steamer-sailing and steamer-sailing. When they touched land they ran away to the curio shops to buy things which are prepared for them—mauve and magenta and blue vitriol things. By this time they have a "Murray" under one arm and an

electric blue eagle with a copperas beak and a yellow '*E pluribus unum*' embroidered on apple-green silk, under the other.

We, being wise, sit in a garden that is not ours, but belongs to a gentleman in slate-coloured silk, who, solely for the sake of the picture, condescends to work as a gardener, in which employ he is sweeping delicately a welt of fallen cherry blossoms from under an azalea, aching to burst into bloom. Steep stone steps, of the colour that nature ripens through long winters, lead up to this garden by way of clumps of bamboo grass. You see the Smell was right when it talked of meeting old friends. Half-a-dozen blue-black pines are standing akimbo against a real sky—not a fog-blur nor a cloud-bank, nor a gray dish-clout wrapped round the sun—but a blue sky. A cherry tree on a slope below them throws up a wave of blossom that breaks all creamy white against their feet, and a clump of willow trail their palest green shoots in front of all. The sun sends for an ambassador through the azalea bushes a lordly swallow-tailed butterfly and his squire, very like the flitting 'chalk-blue' of the English downs. The warmth of the East, that goes through, not over, the lazy body, is added to the light of the East—the splendid lavish light that clears but does not bewilder the eye. Then the new leaves of the spring wink like fat emeralds and the loaded branches of cherry-bloom grow transparent and glow as a hand glows held up against flame. Little, warm sighs come up from the moist, warm earth, and the fallen petals stir on the ground, turn over, and go to sleep again. Outside, beyond the foliage, where the sunlight lies on the slate-coloured roofs, the ridged rice-fields beyond the roofs, and the

hills beyond the rice-fields, is all Japan—only all Japan; and this that they call the old French Legation is the Garden of Eden that most naturally dropped down here after the Fall. For some small hint of the beauties to be shown later there is the roof of a temple, ridged and fluted with dark tiles, flung out casually beyond the corner of the bluff on which the garden stands. Any other curve of the eaves would not have consorted with the sweep of the pine branches; therefore, this curve was made, and being made, was perfect. The congregation of the globe-trotters are in the hotel, scuffling for guides, in order that they may be shown the sights of Japan, which is all one sight. They must go to Tokio, they must go to Nikko; they must surely see all that is to be seen, and then write home to their barbarian families that they are getting used to the sight of bare, brown legs. Before this day is ended, they will all, thank goodness, have splitting headaches and burnt-out eyes. It is better to lie still and hear the grass grow—to soak in the heat and the smell and the sounds and the sights that come unasked.

Our garden overhangs the harbour, and by pushing aside one branch we look down upon a heavy-sterned fishing-boat, the straw-gold mats of the deck-house pushed back to show the perfect order and propriety of the housekeeping that is going forward. The father-fisher, sitting frog-fashion, is poking at a tiny box full of charcoal, and the light, white ash is blown back into the face of a largish Japanese doll, price two shillings and threepence in Bayswater. The doll wakes, turns into a Japanese baby something more valuable than money could buy—a baby with a shaven head and aimless legs. It crawls to the thing in the polished

brown box, is picked up just as it is ready to eat live coals, and is set down behind a thwart, where it drums upon a bucket, addressing the firebox from afar. Half-a-dozen cherry blossoms slide off a bough, and waver down to the water close to the Japanese doll, who in another minute will be overside in pursuit of these miracles. The father-fisher has it by the pink hind leg, and this time it is tucked away, all but the top-knot, out of sight among umber nets and sepia cordage. Being an Oriental it makes no protest, and the boat scuds out to join the little fleet in the offing.

Then two sailors of a man-of-war come along the sea face, lean over the canal below the garden, spit, and roll away. The sailor in port is the only superior man. To him all matters rare and curious are either "them things" or "them other things." He does not hurry himself, he does not seek adjectives other than those which custom puts into his mouth for all occasions; but the beauty of life penetrates his being insensibly till he gets drunk, falls foul of the local policeman, smites him into the nearest canal, and disposes of the question of treaty revision with a hiccup. All the same, Jack says that he has a grievance against the policeman, who is paid a dollar for every strayed seaman he brings up to the Consular Courts for overstaying his leave, and so forth. Jack says that the little fellows deliberately hinder him from getting back to his ship, and then with devilish art and craft of wrestling tricks—'there are about a hundred of 'em, and they can throw you with every qualified one'—carry him to justice. Now when Jack is softened with drink he does not tell lies. This is his grievance, and he says that them blanketed consuls ought to know. 'They plays

into each other's hands, and stops you at the Hatoba'—the policemen do. The visitor who is neither a seaman nor drunk, cannot swear to the truth of this, or indeed anything else. He moves not only among fascinating scenes and a lovely people but, as he is sure to find out before he has been a day ashore, between stormy questions. Three years ago there were no questions that were not going to be settled off-hand in a blaze of paper lanterns. The Constitution was new. It has a gray, pale cover with a chrysanthemum at the back, and a Japanese told me then, 'Now we have Constitution same as other countries, and *so* it is all right. Now we are quite civilised because of Constitution.'

A perfectly irrelevant story comes to mind here. Do you know that in Madeira once they had a revolution which lasted just long enough for the national poet to compose a national anthem, and then was put down? All that is left of the revolt now is the song that you hear on the twangling *nachettes*, the baby banjoes, of a moonlight night under the banana fronds at the back of Funchal. And the high-pitched nasal refrain of it is 'Constituci-*oun !*'

Since that auspicious date it seems that the questions have impertinently come up, and the first and the last of them is that of Treaty Revision. Says the Japanese Government, 'Only obey our laws, our new laws that we have carefully compiled from all the wisdom of the West, and you shall go up country as you please and trade where you will, instead of living cooped up in concessions and being judged by consuls. Treat us as you would treat France or Germany, and we will treat you as our own subjects.'

Here, as you know, the matter rests between the two

thousand foreigners and the forty million Japanese—a God-send to all editors of Tokio and Yokohama, and the despair of the newly arrived in whose nose, remember, is the smell of the East, one and indivisible, Immemorial, Eternal, and, above all, instructive.

Indeed, it is only by walking out at least half a mile that you escape from the aggressive evidences of civilisation, and come out into the rice-fields at the back of the town. Here men with twists of blue and white cloth round their heads are working knee deep in the thick black mud. The largest field may be something less than two tablecloths, while the smallest is, say, a speck of undercliff, on to which it were hard to back a 'rickshaw, wrested from the beach and growing its clump of barley within spray-shot of the waves. The field paths are the trodden tops of the irrigating cuts, and the main roads as wide as two perambulators abreast. From the uplands—the beautiful uplands planted in exactly the proper places with pine and maple—the ground comes down in terraced pocket on pocket of rich earth to the levels again, and it would seem that every heavily thatched farmhouse was chosen with special regard to the view. If you look closely when the people go to work you will see that a household spreads itself over plots, maybe, a quarter of a mile apart. A revenue map of a village shows that this scatteration is apparently designed, but the reason is not given. One thing at least is certain. The assessment of these patches can be no light piece of work—just the thing, in fact, that would give employment to a large number of small and variegated Government officials, any one of whom, assuming that he was of an Oriental cast of mind, might make the cultivator's

life interesting. I remember now—a second-time-seen place brings back things that were altogether buried—seeing three years ago the pile of Government papers required in the case of one farm. They were many and systematic, but the interesting thing about them was the amount of work that they must have furnished to those who were neither cultivators nor Treasury officials.

If one knew Japanese, one could collogue with that gentleman in the straw-hat and the blue loin-cloth who is chopping within a sixteenth of an inch of his naked toes with the father and mother of all weed-spuds. His version of local taxation might be inaccurate, but it would surely be picturesque. Failing his evidence, be pleased to accept two or three things that may or may not be facts of general application. They differ in a measure from statements in the books. The present land-tax is nominally $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, payable in cash on a three, or as some say a five, yearly settlement. But, according to certain officials, there has been no settlement since 1875. Land lying fallow for a season pays the same tax as land in cultivation, unless it is unproductive through flood or calamity (read earthquake here). The Government tax is calculated on the capital value of the land, taking a measure of about 11,000 square feet or a quarter of an acre as the unit.

Now, one of the ways of getting at the capital value of the land is to see what the railways have paid for it. The very best rice-land, taking the Japanese dollar at three shillings, is about £65:10s. per acre. Unirrigated land for vegetable growing is something over £9:12s., and forest £2:11s. As these are railway rates, they may be fairly held to cover large areas. In private sales the prices may reasonably be higher.

It is to be remembered that some of the very best rice-land will bear two crops of rice in the year. Most soil will bear two crops, the first being millet, rape, vegetables, and so on, sown on dry soil and ripening at the end of May. Then the ground is at once prepared for the wet crop, to be harvested in October or thereabouts. Land-tax is payable in two installments. Rice-land pays between the 1st November and the middle of December and the 1st January and the last of February. Other land pays between July and August and September and December. Let us see what the average yield is. The gentleman in the sun-hat and the loin-cloth would shriek at the figures, but they are approximately accurate. Rice naturally fluctuates a good deal, but it may be taken in the rough at five Japanese dollars (fifteen shillings) per *koku* of 330 lbs. Wheat and maize of the first spring crop is worth about eleven shillings per *koku*. The first crop gives nearly $1\frac{3}{4}$ *koku* per *tau* (the quarter acre unit of measurement aforesaid), or eighteen shillings per quarter acre, or £3:12s. per acre. The rice crop at two *koku* or £1:10s. the quarter acre gives £6 an acre. Total £9:12s. This is not altogether bad if you reflect that the land in question is not the very best rice-land, but ordinary No. 1, at £25:16s. per acre, capital value.

A son has the right to inherit his father's land on the father's assessment, so long as its term runs, or, when the term has expired, has a prior claim as against any one else. Part of the taxes, it is said, lies by in the local prefecture's office as a reserve fund against inundations. Yet, and this seems a little confusing, there are between five and seven other local, provincial, and municipal taxes which can reasonably be applied to the

same ends. No one of these taxes exceeds a half of the land-tax, unless it be the local prefecture tax of 2½ per cent.

In the old days the people were taxed, or perhaps squeezed would be the better word, to about one-half of the produce of the land. There are those who may say that the present system is not so advantageous as it looks. Beforetime, the farmers, it is true, paid heavily, but only, on their nominal holdings. They could, and often did, hold more land than they were assessed on. To-day a rigid bureaucracy surveys every foot of their farms, and upon every foot they have to pay. Somewhat similar complaints are made still by the simple peasantry of India, for if there is one thing that the Oriental detest more than another, it is the damnable Western vice of accuracy. That leads to doing things by rule. Still, by the look of those terraced fields, where the water is led so cunningly from level to level, the Japanese cultivator must enjoy at least one excitement. If the villages up the valley tamper with the water supply, there must surely be excitement down the valley—argument, protest, and the breaking of heads.

The days of romance, therefore, are not all dead.

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This that follows happened on the coast twenty miles through the fields from Yokohama, at Kamakura, that is to say, where the great bronze Buddha sits facing the sea to hear the centuries go by. He has been described again and again—his majesty, his aloofness, and every one of his dimensions, the smoky little shrine within him, and the plumed hill that makes the background to his throne. For that reason he remains, as he remained

from the beginning, beyond all hope of description—as it might be, a visible god sitting in the garden of a world made new. They sell photographs of him with tourists standing on his thumb nail, and, apparently, any brute of any gender can scrawl his or her ignoble name over the inside of the massive bronze plates that build him up. Think for a moment of the indignity and the insult. Imagine the ancient, orderly gardens with their clipped trees, shorn turf, and silent ponds smoking in the mist that the hot sun soaks up after rain, and the green-bronze image of the Teacher of the Law wavering there as it half seems through incense clouds. The earth is all one censer, and myriads of frogs are making the haze ring. It is too warm to do more than to sit on a stone and watch the eyes that, having seen all things, see no more—the down-dropped eyes, the forward droop of the head, and the colossal simplicity of the folds of the robe over arm and knee. Thus, and in no other fashion, did Buddha sit in the old days when Ananda asked questions and the dreamer began to dream of the lives that lay behind him ere the lips moved, and as the Chronicles say: 'He told a tale.' This would be the way he began, for dreamers in the East tell something the same sort of tales to-day: 'Long ago when Devadatta was King of Benares, there lived a virtuous elephant, a reprobate ox, and a King without understanding.' And the tale would end, after the moral had been drawn for Ananda's benefit: 'Now, the reprobate ox was such an one, and the King was such another, but the virtuous elephant was I, myself, Ananda.' Thus, then, he told the tales in the bamboo grove, and the bamboo grove is there to-day. Little blue and gray and slate-robed figures pass under

its shadow, buy two or three joss-sticks, disappear into the shrine, that is, the body of the god, come out smiling, and drift away through the shrubberies. A fat carp in a pond sucks at a fallen leaf with just the sound of a wicked little worldly kiss. Then the earth steams, and steams in silence, and a gorgeous butterfly, full six inches from wing to wing, cuts through the steam in a zigzag of colour and flickers up to the forehead of the god. And Buddha said that a man must look on everything as illusion—even light and colour—the time-worn bronze of metal against blue-green of pine and pale emerald of bamboo—the lemon sash of the girl in the cinnamon dress, with coral pins in her hair, leaning against a block of weather-bleached stone—and, last, the spray of blood-red azalea that stands on the pale gold mats of the tea-house beneath the honey-coloured thatch. To overcome desire and covetousness of mere gold, which is often very vilely designed, that is conceivable, but why must a man give up the delight of the eye, colour that rejoices, light that cheers, and line that satisfies the innermost deeps of the heart? Ah, if the Bodhisat had only seen his own image!

OUR OVERSEAS MEN

ALL things considered, there are only two kinds of men in the world—those that stay at home and those that do not. The second are the most interesting. Some day a man will bethink himself and write a book about the breed in a book called 'The Book of the Overseas Club,' for it is at the club-houses all the way from Aden to Yokohama that the life of the Outside Men is best seen and their talk is best heard. A strong family likeness runs through both building and members, and a large and careless hospitality is the note. There is always the same open-doored, high-ceiled house, with matting on the floors; the same come and go of dark-skinned servants, and the same assembly of men talking horse or business, in raiment that would fatally scandalise a London committee, among files of newspapers from a fortnight to five weeks old. The life of the Outside Men includes plenty of sunshine, and as much air as may be stirring. At the Cape, where the Dutch housewives distil and sell the very potent Vanderhun, and the absurd home-made hansom cabs waddle up and down the yellow dust of Adderley Street are the members of the big import and export firms, the shipping and insurance offices, inventors of mines, and exploiters of new territories with now and then an officer strayed from India to buy mules for the Government, a Government House aide-

de-camp, a sprinkling of the officers of the garrison, tanned skippers of the Union and Castle Lines, and naval men from the squadron at Simon's Town. Here they talk of the sins of Cecil Rhodes, the insolence of Natal, the beauties or otherwise of the solid Boer vote, and the dates of the steamers. The *argot* is Dutch and Kaffir, and every one can hum the national anthem that begins 'Pack your kit and trek, Johnny Bowlegs.' In the stately Hongkong Clubhouse, which is to the further what the Bengal Club is to the nearer East, you meet much the same gathering, *minus* the mining speculators and *plus* men whose talk is of tea, silk, shortings, and Shanghai ponies. The speech of the Outside Men at this point becomes fearfully mixed with pidgin-English and local Chinese terms, rounded with corrupt Portuguese. At Melbourne, in a long verandah giving on a grass plot, where laughing jackasses laugh very horribly, sit wool kings, premiers, and breeders of horses after their kind. The older men talk of the days of the Eureka Stockade and the younger of 'shearing wars' in North Queensland, while the traveller moves timidly among them wondering what under the world every third word means. At Wellington, overlooking the harbour (all right-minded clubs should command the sea), another and yet a like sort of men speak of sheep, the rabbits, the land courts, and the ancient heresies of Sir Julius Vogel; and their more expressive sentences borrow from the Maori. And elsewhere, and elsewhere, and elsewhere among the Outside Men it is the same—the same mixture of every trade, calling, and profession under the sun; the same clash of conflicting interests touching the uttermost parts of the earth; the same intimate, and sometimes appalling knowledge of

your neighbour's business and shortcomings; the same large-palmed hospitality, and the same interest on the part of the younger men in the legs of a horse. Decidedly, it is at the Overseas Club all the world over that you get to know some little of the life of the community. London is egoistical, and the world for her ends with the four-mile cab radius. There is no provincialism like the provincialism of London. That big slack-water coated with the drift and rubbish of a thousand men's thoughts esteems itself the open sea because the waves of all the oceans break on her borders. To those in her midst she is terribly imposing, but they forget that there is more than one kind of imposition. Look back upon her from ten thousand miles, when the mail is just in at the Overseas Club, and she is wondrous tiny. Nine-tenths of her news—so vital, so epoch-making over there—loses its significance, and the rest is as the scuffling of ghosts in a back-attic.

Here in Yokohama the Overseas Club has two mails and four sets of papers—English, French, German, and American, as suits the variety of its constitution—and the verandah by the sea, where the big telescope stands, is a perpetual feast of the Pentecost. The population of the club changes with each steamer in harbour, for the sea captains swing in, are met with 'Hello! where did you come from?' and mix at the bar and billiard-tables for their appointed time and go to sea again. The white-painted warships supply their contingent of members also, and there are wonderful men, mines of most fascinating adventure, who have an interest in sealing-brigs that go to the Kurile Islands, and somehow get into trouble with the Russian authorities. Consuls and judges of the Consular Courts meet men

over on leave from the China ports, or it may be Manila, and they all talk tea, silk, banking, and exchange with its fixed residents. Everything is always as bad as it can possibly be, and everybody is on the verge of ruin. That is why, when they have decided that life is no longer worth living, they go down to the skittle alley—to commit suicide. From the outside, when a cool wind blows among the papers and there is a sound of smashing ice in an inner apartment, and every third man is talking about the approaching races, the life seems to be a desirable one. 'What more could a man need to make him happy?' says the passer-by. A perfect climate, a lovely country, plenty of pleasant society, and the politest people on earth to deal with. The resident smiles and invites the passer-by to stay through July and August. Further, he presses him to do business with the politest people on earth, and to continue so doing for a term of years. Thus the traveller perceives beyond doubt that the resident is prejudiced by the very fact of his residence, and gives it as his matured opinion that Japan is a faultless land, marred only by the presence of the foreign community. And yet, let us consider. It is the foreign community that has made it possible for the traveller to come and go from hotel to hotel, to get his passport for inland travel, to telegraph his safe arrival to anxious friends, and generally enjoy himself much more than he would have been able to do in his own country. Government and gun-boats may open a land, but it is the men of the Overseas Club that keep it open. Their reward (not alone in Japan) is the bland patronage or the scarcely veiled contempt of those who profit by their labours. It is hopeless to explain to a traveller who has been 'shayoed' into

half-a-dozen shops and 'sayonaraed' out of half-a-dozen more and politely cheated in each one, that the Japanese is an Oriental, and, therefore, embarrassingly economical of the truth. 'That's his politeness,' says the traveller. 'He does not wish to hurt your feelings. Love him and treat him like a brother, and he'll change.' To treat one of the most secretive of races on a brotherly basis is not very easy, and the natural politeness that enters into a signed and sealed contract and undulates out of it so soon as it does not sufficiently pay is more than embarrassing. It is almost annoying. The want of fixity or commercial honour may be due to some natural infirmity of the artistic temperament, or to the manner in which the climate has affected, and his ruler has ruled, the man himself for untold centuries.

Those who know the East know, where the system of 'squeeze,' which is commission, runs through every transaction of life, from the sale of a groom's place upward, where the woman walks behind the man in the streets, and where the peasant gives you for the distance to the next town as many or as few miles as he thinks you will like, that these things must be so. Those who do not know will not be persuaded till they have lived there. The Overseas Club puts up its collective nose scornfully when it hears of the New and Regenerate Japan sprung to life since the 'seventies. It grins with shame be it written, at an Imperial Diet modelled on the German plan and a Code Napoléon à la Japonaise. It is so far behind the New Era as to doubt that an Oriental country, ridden by etiquette of the sternest, and social distinctions almost as hard as those of caste, can be turned out to Western gauge in the compass of a very young man's life. And it *must* be prejudiced, be-

cause it is daily and hourly in contact with the Japanese, except when it can do business with the Chinaman whom it prefers. Was there ever so disgraceful a club!

Just at present, a crisis, full blown as a chrysanthemum, has developed in the Imperial Diet. Both Houses accuse the Government of improper interference—this Japanese for 'plenty stick and some banknote'—at the recent elections. They then did what was equivalent to passing a vote of censure on the Ministry and refusing to vote government measures. So far the wildest advocate of representative government could have desired nothing better. Afterwards, things took a distinctly Oriental turn. The Ministry refused to resign, and the Mikado prorogued the Diet for a week to think things over. The Japanese papers are now at issue over the event. Some say that representative government implies party government, and others swear at large. The Overseas Club says for the most part—'Skittles!'

It is a picturesque situation—one that suggests romances and extravaganzas. Thus, imagine a dreaming Court intrenched behind a triple line of moats where the lotus blooms in summer—a Court whose outer fringe is aggressively European, but whose heart is Japan of long ago, where a dreaming King sits among some wives or other things, amused from time to time with magic-lantern shows and performing fleas—a holy King whose sanctity is used to conjure with, and who twice a year gives garden-parties where every one must come in top-hat and frock coat. Round this Court, wavering between the splendours of the sleeping and the variety shows of the Crystal Palace, place in furious but carefully veiled antagonism the fragments of newly

shattered castes, their natural Oriental eccentricities overlaid with borrowed Western notions. Imagine now, a large and hungry bureaucracy, French in its fretful insistence on detail where detail is of no earthly moment, Oriental in its stress on etiquette and punctillo, recruited from a military caste accustomed for ages past to despise alike farmer and trader. This caste, we will suppose, is more or less imperfectly controlled by a syndicate of three clans, which supply their own nominees to the Ministry. These are adroit, versatile, and unscrupulous men, hampered by no western prejudice in favour of carrying any plan to completion. Through and at the bidding of these men, the holy Monarch acts; and the acts are wonderful. To criticise these acts exists a wild-cat Press, liable to suppression at any moment, as morbidly sensitive to outside criticism as the American, and almost as childishly untruthful, fungoid in the swiftness of its growth, and pitiable in its unseasoned rashness. Backers of this press in its wilder moments, lawless, ignorant, sensitive and vain, are the student class, educated in the main at Government expense, and a thorn in the side of the State. Judges without training handle laws without precedents, and new measures are passed and abandoned with almost inconceivable levity. Out of the welter of classes and interests that are not those of the common folk is evolved the thing called Japanese policy; that has the proportion and the perspective of a Japanese picture.

Finality and stability are absent from its councils. To-day, for reasons none can explain, it is pro-foreign to the verge of servility. To-morrow, for reasons equally obscure, the pendulum swings back, and—the students are heaving mud at the foreigners in the

streets. Vexatious, irresponsible, incoherent, and, above all, cheaply mysterious, is the rule of the land—stultified by intrigue and counter-intrigue, chequered with futile reforms begun on European lines and lightheartedly thrown aside; studded, as a bower-bird's run is studded with shells and shining pebbles, with plagiarisms from half the world—an operetta of administration, wherein the shadow of the King among his wives, Samurai policemen, doctors who have studied under Pasteur, kid-gloved cavalry officers from St. Cyr, judges with University degrees, harlots with fiddles, newspaper correspondents, masters of the ancient ceremonies of the land, paid members of the Diet, secret societies that borrow the knife and the dynamite of the Irish, sons of dispossessed Daimios returned from Europe and waiting for what may turn up, with ministers of the syndicate who have wrenched Japan from her repose of twenty years ago, circle, flicker, shift, and reform, in bewildering rings, round the foreign resident. Is the extravaganza complete?

Somewhere in the background of the stage are the people of the land—of whom a very limited proportion enjoy the privileges of representative government. Whether in the past few years they have learned what the thing means, or, learning, have the least intention of making any use of it, is not clear. Meantime, the game of government goes forward as merrily as a game of puss-in-the-corner, with the additional joy that not more than half-a-dozen men know who is controlling it or what in the wide world it intends to do. In Tokio live the steadily, diminishing staff of Europeans employed by the Emperor as engineers, railway experts, professors in the colleges and so forth. Before many

years they will all be dispensed with, and the country will set forth among the nations alone and on its own responsibility.

In fifty years then, from the time that the intrusive American first broke her peace, Japan will experience her new birth and, reorganized from sandal to top-knot, play the *samisen* in the march of modern progress. This is the great advantage of being born into the New Era, when individual and community alike can get something for nothing—pay without work, education without effort, religion without thought, and free government without slow and bitter toil.

The Overseas Club, as has been said, is behind the spirit of the age. It has to work for what it gets, and it does not always get what it works for. Nor can its members take ship and go home when they please. Imagine for a little, the contented frame of mind that is bred in a man by the perpetual contemplation of a harbour full of steamers as a Piccadilly cab-rank of hansoms. The weather is hot, we will suppose; something has gone wrong with his work that day, or his children are not looking so well as might be. Pretty tiled bungalows, bowered in roses and wistaria, do not console him, and the voices of the politest people on earth jar sorely. He knows every soul in the club, has thoroughly talked out every subject of interest, and would give half a year's—oh, five years' pay—for one lung-filling breath of air that has life in it, one sniff of the haying grass, or half a mile of muddy London street where the muffin bell tinkles in the four o'clock fog. Then the big liner moves out across the staring blue of the bay. So-and-so and such-an-one, both friends, are going home in her, and some one else goes next week by

the French mail. He, and he alone, it seems to him, must stay on; and it is so maddeningly easy to go—for every one save himself. The boat's smoke dies out along the horizon, and he is left alone with the warm wind and the white dust of the Bund. Now Japan is a good place, a place that men swear by and live in for thirty years at a stretch. There are China ports a week's sail to the westward where life is really hard, and where the sight of the restless shipping hurts very much indeed. Tourists and you who travel the world over, be very gentle to the men of the Overseas Clubs. Remember that, unlike yourselves, they have not come here for the good of their health, and that the return ticket in your wallet may possibly colour your views of their land. Perhaps it would not be altogether wise on the strength of much kindness from Japanese officials to recommend that these your countrymen be handed over lock, stock, and barrel to a people that are beginning to experiment with fresh-drafted, half-grafted codes which do not include juries, to a system that does not contemplate a free Press, to a suspicious absolutism from which there is no appeal. Truly, it might be interesting, but as surely it would begin in farce and end in tragedy, that would leave the politest people on earth in no case to play at civilised government for a long time to come. In his concession, where he is an apologetic and much sat-upon importation, the foreign resident does no harm. He does not always sue for money due to him on the part of a Japanese. Once outside those limits, free to move into the heart of the country it would only be a question of time as to where and when the trouble would begin. And in the long run it would not be the foreign resident that would

suffer. The imaginative eye can see the most unpleasant possibilities, from a general overrunning of Japan by the Chinaman, who is far the most important foreign resident, to the shelling of Tokio by a joyous and bounding democracy, anxious to vindicate her national honour and to learn how her newly made navy works.

But there are scores of arguments that would confute and overwhelm this somewhat gloomy view. The statistics of Japan, for instance, are as beautiful and fit as neatly as the woodwork of her houses. By these it would be possible to prove anything.

SOME EARTHQUAKES

A RADICAL Member of Parliament at Tokio has just got into trouble with his constituents, and they have sent him a priceless letter of reproof. Among other things they point out that a politician should not be 'a waterweed which wobbles hither and thither according to the motion of the stream.' Nor should he 'like a ghost without legs drift along before the wind.' 'Your conduct,' they say, 'has been both of a waterweed and a ghost, and we purpose in a little time to give you proof of our true Japanese spirit.' That member will very likely be mobbed in his 'rickshaw and prodded to inconvenience with sword-sticks; for the constituencies are most enlightened. But how in the world can a man under these skies behave except as a waterweed and a ghost? It is in the air—the wobble and the legless drift. An energetic tourist would have gone to Hakodate, seen Ainos at Sapporo, ridden across the northern island under the gigantic thistles, caught salmon, looked in at Vladivostock, and done half a hundred things in the time that one lazy loafer has wasted watching the barley turn from green to gold, the azaleas blossom and burn out, and the spring give way to the warm rains of summer. Now the iris has taken up the blazonry of the year, and the tide of the tourists ebbs westward.

The permanent residents are beginning to talk of

hill places to go to for the hot weather, and all the available houses in the resort are let. In a little while the men from China will be coming over for their holidays, but just at present we are in the thick of the tea season, and there is no time to waste on frivolities. "Packing" is a valid excuse for anything, from forgetting a dinner to declining a tennis party, and the tempers of husbands are judged leniently. All along the sea face is an inspiring smell of the finest new-mown hay, and canals are full of boats loaded up with the boxes jostling down to the harbour. At the club men say rude things about the arrivals of the mail. There never was a post-office yet that did not rejoice in knocking a man's Sabbath into flinders. A fair office day's work may begin at eight and end at six, or, if the mail comes in, at midnight. There is no overtime or eight-hours' baby-talk in tea. Yonder are the ships; here is the stuff, and behind all is the American market. The rest is your own affair.

The narrow streets are blocked with the wains bringing down, in boxes of every shape and size, the up-country rough leaf. Some one must take delivery of these things, find room for them in the packed warehouse, and sample them before they are blended and go to the firing.

More than half the elaborate processes are 'lost work' so far as the quality of the stuff goes; but the markets insist on a good-looking leaf, with polish, face and curl to it, and in this, as in other business, the call of the markets is the law. The factory floors are made slippery with the tread of bare-footed coolies, who shout as the tea whirls through its transformations. The over-note to the clamour—an uncanny thing too—

is the soft rustle-down of the tea itself—stacked in heaps, carried in baskets, dumped through chutes, rising and falling in the long troughs where it is polished, and disappearing at last into the heart of the firing-machine—always this insistent whisper of moving dead leaves. Steam-sieves sift it into grades, with jarrings and thumpings that make the floor quiver, and the thunder of steam-gear is always at its heels; but it continues to mutter unabashed till it is riddled down into the big, foil-lined boxes and lies at peace.

A few days ago the industry suffered a check which, lasting not more than two minutes, lost several hundred pounds of hand-fired tea. It was something after this way. Into the stillness of a hot, stuffy morning came an unpleasant noise as of batteries of artillery charging up all the roads together, and at least one bewildered sleeper waking saw his empty boots where they 'sat and played toccatas stately at the clavicord.' It was the washstand really but the effect was awful. Then a clock fell and a wall cracked, and heavy hands caught the house by the roof-pole and shook it furiously. To preserve an equal mind when things are hard is good, but he who has not fumbled desperately at bolted jalousies that will not open while a whole room is being tossed in a blanket does not know how hard it is to find any sort of mind at all. The end of the terror was inadequate—a rush into the still, heavy outside air, only to find the servants in the garden giggling (the Japanese would giggle through the Day of Judgment) and to learn that the earthquake was over. Then came the news, swift borne from the business quarters below the hill, that the coolies of certain factories had fled shrieking at the first shock, and that all the tea in the pans was

burned to a crisp. That, certainly, was some consolation for undignified panic; and there remained the hope that a few tall chimneys up the line at Tokio would have collapsed. They stood firm, however, and the local papers, used to this kind of thing, merely spoke of the shock as 'severe.' Earthquakes are demoralising; but they bring out all the weaknesses of human nature. First is down-right dread; the stage of—'only let me get into the open and I'll reform,' then the impulse to send news of the most terrible shock of modern times flying east and west among the cables. (Did not your own hair stand straight on end, and, therefore, must not everybody else's have done likewise?) Last, as fallen humanity picks itself together, comes the cry of the mean little soul: 'What! Was *that* all? I wasn't frightened from the beginning.'

It is wholesome and tonic to realise the powerlessness of man in the face of these little accidents. The heir of all the ages, the annihilator of time and space, who politely doubts the existence of his Maker, hears the roof-beams crack and strain above him, and scuttles about like a rabbit in a stoppered warren. If the shock endure for twenty minutes, the annihilator of time and space must camp out under the blue and hunt for his dead among the rubbish. Given a violent convulsion (only just such a slipping of strata as carelessly piled volumes will accomplish in a book-case) and behold, the heir of all the ages is stark, raving mad—a brute among the dishevelled hills. Set a hundred of the world's greatest spirits, men of fixed principles, high aims, resolute endeavour, enormous experience, and the modesty that these attributes bring—set them to live through such a catastrophe as that which wiped out

Nagoya last October, and at the end of three days there would remain few whose souls might be called their own.

So much for yesterday's shock. To-day there has come another; and a most comprehensive affair it is. It has broken nothing, unless maybe an old heart or two cracks later on; and the wise people in the settlement are saying that they predicted it from the first. None the less as an earthquake it deserves recording.

It was a very rainy afternoon; all the streets were full of gruelly mud, and all the business men were at work in their offices when it began. A knot of Chinamen were studying a closed door from whose further side came a most unpleasant sound of bolting and locking up. The notice on the door was interesting. With deep regret did the manager of the New Oriental Banking Corporation, Limited (most decidedly limited) announce that by telegraphic orders from home he had suspended payment. Said one Chinaman to another in pidgin-Japanese: 'It is shut,' and went away. The noise of barring up continued, the rain fell, and the notice stared down the wet street. That was all. There must have been two or three men passing by to whom the announcement meant the loss of every penny of their savings—comforting knowledge to digest after tiffin. In London, of course, the failure would not mean so much; there are many banks in the City, and people would have had warning. Here banks are few, people are dependent on them, and this news came out of the sea unheralded, an evilborn with all its teeth.

After the crash of a bursting shell every one who can picks himself up, brushes the dirt off his uniform, and

tries to make a joke of it. Then some one whips a handkerchief round his hand—a splinter has torn it—and another finds warm streaks running down his forehead. Then a man, overlooked till now and past help, groans to the death. Everybody perceives with a start that this is no time for laughter, and the dead and wounded are attended to.

Even so at the Overseas Club when the men got out of office. The brokers had told them the news. In filed the English, and Americans, and Germans, and French, and 'Here's a pretty mess!' they said one and all. Many of them were hit, but, like good men, they did not say how severely.

'Ah!' said a little P. and O. official, wagging his head sagaciously (he had lost a thousand dollars since noon), 'It's all right *now*. They're trying to make the best of it. In three or four days we shall hear more about it. I meant to draw my money just before I went down coast, but——' Curiously enough, it was the same story throughout the Club. Everybody had intended to withdraw, and nearly everybody had—not done so. The manager of a bank which had *not* failed was explaining how, in his opinion, the crash had come about. This was also very human. It helped none. Entered a lean American, throwing back his waterproof all dripping with the rain; his face was calm and peaceful. 'Boy, whisky and soda,' he said.

'How much haf you losd?' said a Teuton bluntly. 'Eight-fifty,' replied the son of George Washington sweetly. 'Don't see how that prevents me having a drink. My glass, sirr.' He continued an interrupted whistling of 'I owe ten dollars to O'Grady' (which he very probably did), and his countenance departed not

from its serenity. If there is anything that one loves an American for it is the way he stands certain kinds of punishment. An Englishman and a heavy loser was being chaffed by a Scotchman whose account at the Japan end of the line had been a trifle overdrawn. True, he would lose in England, but the thought of the few dollars saved here cheered him.

More men entered, sat down by tables, stood in groups, or remained apart by themselves, thinking with knit brows. One must think quickly when one's bills are falling due. The murmur of voices thickened, and there was no rumbling in the skittle-alley to interrupt it. Everybody knows everybody else at the Overseas Club, and everybody sympathises. A man passed stiffly and some one of a group turned to ask lightly, 'Hit, old man?' 'Like hell,' he said, and went on biting his unlit cigar. Another man was telling, slowly and somewhat bitterly, how he had expected one of his children to join him out here, and how the passage had been paid with a draft on the O. B. C. But now . . . *There*, ladies and gentlemen, is where it hurts, this little suspension out here. It destroys plans, pretty ones hoped for and prayed over, maybe for years; it knocks pleasant domestic arrangements galleywest over and above all the mere ruin that it causes. The curious thing in the talk was that there was no abuse of the bank. The men were in the Eastern trade themselves and they knew. It was the Yokohama manager and the clerks thrown out of employment (connection with a broken bank, by the way, goes far to ruin a young man's prospects) for whom they were sorry. 'We're doing ourselves well this year,' said a wit grimly. 'One free-shooting case, one thundering libel case, and

a bank smash. Showing off pretty before the globe-trotters, aren't we?'

'Gad, think of the chaps at sea with letters of credit. Eh? They'll land and get the best rooms at the hotels and find they're penniless,' said another.

'Never mind the globe-trotters,' said a third. 'Look nearer home. This does for so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so, all old men; and every penny of theirs goes. Poor devils!'

'That reminds me of some one else,' said yet another voice. '*His* wife's at home, too. Whew!' and he whistled drearily. So did the tide of voices run on till men got to talking over the chances of a dividend. 'They went to the Bank of England,' drawled an American, 'and the Bank of England let them down. 'Said their securities weren't good enough.'

'Great Scott!'—a hand came down on a table to emphasise the remark—'I sailed half way up the Mediterranean once with a Bank of England director; wish I'd tipped him over the rail and lowered him a boat on his own security—if it was good enough.'

'Baring's goes. The O. B. C. don't,' replied the American, blowing smoke through his nose. 'This business looks de-ci-ded-ly prob-le-mat-i-cal. What-at?'

'Oh, they'll pay the depositors in full. Don't you fret,' said a man who had lost nothing and was anxious to console.

'I'm a shareholder,' said the American, and smoked on.

The rain continued to fall, and the umbrellas dripped in the racks, and the wet men came and went, circling round the central fact that it was a bad business, till the

day, as was most fit, shut down in drizzling darkness. There was a refreshing sense of brotherhood in misfortunes in the little community that had just been electrocuted and did not want any more shocks. All the pain that in England would be taken home to be borne in silence and alone was here bulked, as it were, and faced in line of companies. Surely the Christians of old must have fought much better when they met the lions by fifties at a time.

At last the men departed; the bachelors to cast up accounts by themselves (there should be some good ponies for sale shortly) and the married men to take counsel. May heaven help him whose wife does not stand by him now! But the women of the Overseas settlements are as thorough as the men. There will be tears for plans forgone, the changing of the little ones' schools and elder children's careers, unpleasant letters to be written home, and more unpleasant ones to be received from relatives who 'told you so from the first.' There will be pinchings too, and straits of which the outside world will know nothing, but the women will pull it through smiling.

Beautiful indeed are the operations of modern finance—especially when anything goes wrong with the machine. To-night there will be trouble in India among the Ceylon planters, the Calcutta jute and the Bombay cotton-brokers, besides the little households of small banked savings. In Hongkong, Singapore, and Shanghai there will be trouble too, and goodness only knows what wreck at Cheltenham, Bath, St. Leonard's, Torquay, and the other camps of the retired Army officers. They are lucky in England who know what happens when it happens, but here the people are at

the wrong end of the cables, and the situation is not good. Only one thing seems certain. There is a notice on a shut door, in the wet, and by virtue of that notice all the money that was theirs yesterday is gone away, and it may never come back again. So all the work that won the money must be done over again; but some of the people are old, and more are tired, and all are disheartened. It is a very sorrowful little community that goes to bed to-night, and there must be as sad ones the world over. Let it be written, however, that of the sections under fire here (and some are cruelly hit) no man whined, or whimpered, or broke down. There was no chance of fighting. It was bitter defeat, but they took it standing.

HALF-A-DOZEN PICTURES

'SOME men when they grow rich, store pictures in a gallery.' Living their friends envy them, and after death the genuineness of the collection is disputed under a dispersing hammer.

A better way is to spread your pictures over all earth; visiting them as Fate allows. Then none can steal or deface, nor any reverse of fortune force a sale; sunshine and tempest warm and ventilate the gallery for nothing, and—in spite of all that has been said of her crudeness—Nature is not altogether a bad frame-maker. The knowledge that you may never live to see an especial treasure twice teaches the eyes to see quickly while the light lasts; and the possession of such a gallery breeds a very fine contempt for painted shows and the smeared things that are called pictures.

In the North Pacific, to the right hand as you go westward, hangs a small study of no particular value as compared with some others. The mist is down on an oily stretch of washed-out sea; through the mist the bats-wings of a sealing schooner are just indicated. In the foreground, all but leaping out of the frame, an open row-boat, painted the crudest blue and white, rides up over the shoulder of a swell. A man in blood-red jersey and long boots, all shining with moisture, stands at the bows holding up the carcase of a silver-bellied sea-otter from whose pelt the wet drips in moon-

stones. Now the artist who could paint the silver wash of the mist, the wriggling treacly reflection of the boat, and the raw red wrists of the man would be something of a workman.

But my gallery is in no danger of being copied at present. Three years since, I met an artist in the stony bed of a brook, between a line of 300 graven, lichened godlings and a flaming bank of azaleas, swearing horribly. He had been trying to paint one of my pictures—nothing more than a big water-worn rock tufted with flowers and a snow-capped hill for background. Most naturally he failed, because there happened to be absolutely no perspective in the thing, and he was pulling the lines about to make some for home consumption. No man can put the contents of a gallon jar into a pint mug. The protests of all uncomfortably-crowded mugs since the world began have settled that long ago, and have given us the working theories, devised by imperfect instruments for imperfect instrument, which are called Rules of Art.

Luckily, those who painted my gallery were born before man. Therefore, my pictures, instead of being boxed up by lumbering bars of gold, are disposed generously between latitudes, equinoxes, monsoons, and the like, and, making all allowance for an owner's partiality, they are really not so bad.

'Down in the South where the ships never go'—between the heel of New Zealand and the South Pole, there is a sea-piece showing a steamer trying to come round in the trough of a big beam sea. The wet light of the day's end comes more from the water than the sky, and the waves are colourless through the haze of the rain, all but two or three blind sea-horses swing-

ing out of the mist on the ship's dripping weather sides. A lamp is lighted in the wheel-house; so one patch of yellow light falls on the green-painted pistons of the steering gear as they snatch up the rudder chains. A big sea has got home. Her stern flies up in the lather of a freed screw, and her deck from poop to the break of the foc's'le goes under in gray-green water level as a mill-race, except where it spouts up above the donkey-engine and the stored derrick-booms. Forward there is nothing but this glare; aft, the interrupted wake drives far to leeward a cut kite string dropped across the seas. The sole thing that has any rest in the turmoil is the jewelled, unwinking eye of an albatross, who is beating across wind leisurely and unconcerned, almost within hand's touch. It is the monstrous egotism of that eye that makes the picture. By all the rules of art there should be a lighthouse or a harbour pier in the background to show that everything will end happily. But there is not, and the red eye does not care whether the thing beneath the still wings stays or staves.

The sister-panel hangs in the Indian Ocean and tells a story, but is none the worse for that. Here you have hot tropical sunlight and a foreshore clothed in stately palms running out into a still and steamy sea burnished steel blue. Along the foreshore, questing as a wounded beast quests for lair, hurries a loaded steamer never built for speed. Consequently, she tears and threshes the water to pieces, and piles it under her nose and cannot put it under her cleanly. Coir-coloured cargo bales are stacked round both masts, and her decks are crammed and double-crammed with dark-skinned passengers—from the foc's'le where they interfere with the crew to the stern where they hamper the wheel.

The funnel is painted blue on yellow, giving her a holiday air, a little out of keeping with the yellow and black cholera flag at her main. She dare not stop; she must not communicate with any one. There are leprous streaks of lime-wash trickling down her plates for a sign of this. So she threshes on down the glorious coast, she and her swarming passengers, with the sickness that destroyeth in the noonday eating out her heart.

Yet another, the pick of all the East rooms, before we have done with blue water. Most of the nations of the earth are at issue under a stretch of white awning above a crowded deck. The cause of the dispute, a deep copper bowl full of rice and fried onions, is upset in the foreground. Malays, Lascars, Hindus, Chinese, Japanese, Burmans—the whole gamut of race-tints, from saffron to tar-black—are twisting and writhing round it, while their vermilion, cobalt, amber, and emerald turbans and head-cloths are lying under foot. Pressed against the yellow ochre of the iron bulwarks to left and right are frightened women and children in turquoise and isabella-coloured clothes. They are half protected by mounds of upset bedding, straw mats, red lacquer boxes, and plaited bamboo trunks, mixed up with tin plates, brass and copper *hukas*, silver opium pipes, Chinese playing cards, and properties enough to drive half-a-dozen artists wild. In the centre of the crowd of furious half-naked men, the fat bare back of a Burman, tattooed from collar-bone to waist-cloth with writhing patterns of red and blue devils, holds the eye first. It is a wicked back. Beyond it is the flicker of a Malay *kris*. A blue, red, and yellow macaw chained to a stanchion spreads his wings against the sun in an

ecstasy of terror. Half-a-dozen red-gold pines and bananas have been knocked down from their ripening-places, and are lying between the feet of the fighters. One pine has rolled against the long brown fur of a muzzled bear. His owner, a bushy-bearded Hindu, kneels over the animal, his body-cloth thrown clear of a hard brown arm, his fingers ready to loose the muzzle-strap. The ship's cook, in blood-stained white, watches from the butcher's shop, and a black Zanzibar stoker grins through the bars of the engine-room hatch, one ray of sun shining straight into his pink mouth. The officer of the watch, a red-whiskered man, is kneeling down on the bridge to peer through the railings, and is shifting a long, lean black revolver from his left hand to his right. The faithful sunlight that puts everything into place, gives his whiskers and the hair on the back of his tanned wrist just the colour of the copper pot, the bear's fur and the trampled pines. For the rest, there is the blue sea beyond the awnings.

Three years' hard work, besides the special knowledge of a lifetime, would be needed to copy—even to copy—this picture. Mr. So-and-so, R. A., could undoubtedly draw the bird; Mr. Such-another (equally R. A.) the bear; and scores of gentlemen the still life; but who would be the man to pull the whole thing together and make it the riotous, tossing cataract of colour and life that it is? And when it was done, some middle-aged person from the provinces, who had never seen a pineapple out of a plate or a *kris* out of the South Kensington, would say that it did not remind him of something that it ought to remind him of, and therefore that it was bad. If the gallery could be bequeathed to the nation, something might, perhaps, be gained, but

the nation would complain of the draughts and the absence of chairs. But no matter. In another world we shall see certain gentlemen set to tickle the backs of Circe's swine through all eternity. Also, they will have to tickle with their bare hands!

The Japanese rooms, visited and set in order for the second time, hold more pictures than could be described in a month; but most of them are small and, excepting always the light, within human compass. One, however, might be difficult. It was an unexpected gift, picked up in a Tokio bye street after dark. Half the town was out for a walk and all the people's clothes were indigo, and so were the shadows, and most of the paper-lanterns were drops of blood red. By the light of smoking oil-lamps people were selling flowers and shrubs—wicked little dwarf pines, stunted peach and plum trees, wistaria bushes clipped and twisted out of all likeness to wholesome plants, leaning and leering out of green-glaze pots. In the flickering of the yellow flames, these forced cripples and the yellow faces above them reeled to and fro fantastically all together. As the light steadied they would return to the pretence of being green things till a puff of the warm night wind among the flares set the whole line off again in a crazy dance of dwergs, their shadows capering on the house fronts behind them.

At a corner of a street, some rich men had got together and left unguarded all the gold, diamonds, and rubies of the East; but when you came near you saw that this treasure was only a gathering of gold-fish in glass globes—yellow, white, and red fish, with from three to five forked tails apiece and eyes that bulged far beyond their heads. There were wooden pans full of

tiny ruby fish, and little children with nets dabbled and shrieked in chase of some special beauty, and the frightened fish kicked up showers of little pearls with their tails. The children carried lanterns in the shape of small red paper fish bobbing at the end of slivers of bamboo, and these drifted through the crowd like a strayed constellation of baby stars. When the children stood at the edge of a canal and called down to unseen friends in boats the pink lights were all reflected orderly below. The light of the thousand small lights in the street went straight up into the darkness among the interlacing telegraph wires, and just at the edge of the shining haze, on a sort of pigeon-trap, forty feet above ground, sat a Japanese fireman, wrapped up in his cloak, keeping watch against fires. He looked unpleasantly like a Bulgarian atrocity or a Burmese 'deviation from the laws of humanity,' being very still and all huddled up in his roost. That was a superb picture and it arranged itself to admiration. Now, disregarding these things and others—wonders and miracles all—men are content to sit in studios and, by light that is not light, to fake subjects from pots and pans and rags and bricks that are called pieces of colour. Their collection of rubbish costs in the end quite as much as a ticket, a first-class one, to new worlds where the 'props' are given away with the sunshine. To do anything because it is or may not be new on the market is wickedness that carries its own punishment; but surely there must be things in this world paintable other and beyond those that lie between the North Cape, say, and Algiers. For the sake of the pictures, putting aside the dear delight of the gamble, it might be worth while to venture out a little beyond the regular circle of

subjects and—see what happens. If a man can draw one thing, it has been said, he can draw anything. At the most he can but fail, and there are several matters in the world worse than failure. Betting on a certainty, for instance, or playing with nicked cards is immoral, and secures expulsion from clubs. Keeping deliberately to one set line of work because you know you can do it and are certain to get money by so doing is, on the other hand, counted a virtue, and secures admission to clubs. There must be a middle way somewhere, as there must be somewhere an unmarried man with no position, reputation, or other vanity to lose, who most keenly wants to find out what his palette is set for in this life. He will pack his steamer-trunk and get into the open to wrestle with effects that he can never reproduce. All the same his will be a superb failure.

'CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS'

FROM Yokohama to Montreal is a long day's journey, and the forepart is uninviting. In three voyages out of five, the North Pacific, too big to lie altogether idle, too idle to get hands about the business of a storm, sulks and smokes like a chimney; the passengers fresh from Japan heat wither in the chill, and a clammy dew distils from the rigging. That gray monotony of sea is not at all homelike, being as yet new and not used to the procession of keels. It holds a very few pictures and the best of its stories—those relating to seal-poaching among the Kuriles and the Russian rookeries—are not exactly fit for publication. There is a man in Yokohama who in a previous life burned galleons with Drake. He is a gentleman adventurer of the largest and most resourceful—by instinct a carver of kingdoms, a ruler of men on the high seas, and an inveterate gambler against Death. Because he supplies nothing more than sealskins to the wholesale dealers at home, the fame of his deeds, his brilliant fights, his more brilliant escapes, and his most brilliant strategy will be lost among sixty-ton schooners, or told only in the mouths of drunken seamen whom none believe. Now there sits a great spirit under the palm trees of the Navigator Group, a thousand leagues to the south, and he, crowned with roses and laurels, strings together the pearls of those parts. When he has

done with this down there perhaps he will turn to the Smoky Seas and the Wonderful Adventures of Captain ——. Then there will be a tale to listen to.

But the first touch of dry land makes the sea and all upon it unreal. Five minutes after the traveller is on the C. P. R. train at Vancouver there is no romance of blue water, but another kind—the life of the train into which he comes to grow as into life aboard ship. A week on wheels turns a man into a part of the machine. He knows when the train will stop to water, wait for news of the trestle ahead, drop the dining car, slip into a sliding to let the West-bound mail go by, or yell through the thick night for an engine to help push up the bank. The snort, the snap and whine of the air-brakes have a meaning for him, and he learns to distinguish between noises—between the rattle of a loose lamp and the ugly rattle of small stones on a scarped embankment—between the 'Hoot! toot!' that scares wandering cows from the line, and the dry roar of the engine at the distance-signal. In England the railway came late into a settled country fenced round with the terrors of the law, and it has remained ever since just a little outside daily life—a thing to be respected.

Here it strolls along, with its hands in its pockets and a straw in its mouth, on the heels of the rough-hewn trail or log road—a platformless, regulationless necessity; and it is treated even by sick persons and young children with a familiarity that sometimes affects the death-rate. There was a small maiden aged seven, who honoured our smoking compartment with her presence when other excitements failed, and it was she that said to the conductor: 'When do we change crews? I want to pick water-lilies—yellow ones.' A mere halt she

knew would not suffice for her needs; but the regular fifteen-minute stop, when the red-painted tool chest was taken off the rear car and a new gang came aboard. The big man bent down to little Impudence—'Want to pick lilies, eh? What would you do if the cars went on and took mamma away, Sis?' 'Take the next train,' she replied, 'and tell the conductor to send me to Brooklyn. I live there.' 'But s'pose he wouldn't?' 'He'd have to,' said Young America. 'I'd be a lost child.'

Now, from the province of Alberta to Brooklyn, U. S. A., may be three thousand miles. A great stretch of that distance is as new as the day before yesterday, and strewn with townships in every stage of growth from the city of one round house, two log huts, and a Chinese camp somewhere in the foot hills of the Selkirks, to Winnipeg with her league-long main street and her warring newspapers. Just at present there is an epidemic of politics in Manitoba, and brass bands and notices of committee meetings are splashed about the towns. By reason of their closeness to the States they have caught the contagion of foul-mouthedness, and accusations of bribery, corruption, and evil-living are many. It is sweet to find a little baby-city, with only three men in it who can handle type, cursing and swearing across the illimitable levels for all the world as though it were a grown-up Christian centre.

All the new towns have their own wants to consider, and the first of these is a railway. If the town is on a line already, then a new line to tap the back country; but at all costs a line. For this it will sell its corrupted soul, and then be very indignant because the railway before which it has grovelled rides rough-shod over the place.

Each new town believes itself to be a possible Winnipeg until the glamour of the thing is a little worn off, and the local paper, sliding down the pole of Pride with the hind legs of despair, says defiantly: 'At least, a veterinary surgeon and a drug-store would meet with encouragement in our midst, and it is a fact that five new buildings have been erected in our midst since the spring.' From a distance nothing is easier than to smile at this sort of thing, but he must have a cool head who can keep his pulse level when just such a wildcat town—ten houses, two churches, and a line of rails—gets 'on the boom.' The reader at home says: 'Yes, but it's all a lie.' It may be, but—did men lie about Denver, Leadville, Ballarat, Broken Hill, Portland, or Winnipeg twenty years ago—or Adelaide when town lots went begging within the memory of middle-aged men? Did they lie about Vancouver six years since, or Creede not twenty months gone? Hardly; and it is just this knowledge that leads the passer-by to give ear to the wildest statements of the wildest towns. Anything is possible, especially among the Rockies where the minerals lie, over and above the mining towns, the centres of ranching country, and the supply towns to the farming districts. There are literally scores upon scores of lakelets in the hills, buried in woods now, that before twenty years are run will be crowded summer resorts. You in England have no idea of what summering means in the States, and less of the amount of money that is spent on the yearly holiday. People have no more than just begun to discover the place called the Banff Hot Springs, two days west of Winnipeg.[1]

[1]See page 170

In a little time they will know half-a-dozen spots not a day's ride from Montreal, and it is along that line that money will be made. In those days, too, wheat will be grown for the English market four hundred miles north of the present fields on the west side; and British Columbia, perhaps the loveliest land in the world next to New Zealand, will have her own line of six-thousand-ton steamers to Australia, and the British investor will no longer throw away his money on hell-cat South American republics, or give it as a hostage to the States. He will keep it in the family as a wise man should. Then the towns that are to-day the only names in the wilderness, yes, and some of those places marked on the map as Hudson Bay Ports will be cities, because—but it is hopeless to make people understand that actually and indeed. We *do* possess an Empire of which Canada is only one portion—an Empire which is not bounded by election-returns on the North and Eastbourne riots on the South—an Empire that has not yet been scratched.

Let us return to the new towns. Three times within one year did fortune come knocking to the door of a man I know. Once at Seattle, when that town was a gray blur after a fire; once at Tacoma, in the days when the steam-tram ran off the rails twice a week; and once at Spokane Falls. But in the roar of the land-boom he did not hear her, and she went away leaving him only a tenderness akin to weakness for all new towns, and a desire, mercifully limited by lack of money, to gamble in every one of them. Of all the excitements that life offers there are few to be compared with the whirl of a red-hot boom; also it is strictly moral, because you *do* fairly earn your unearned increment by labour and

perspiration and sitting up far into the night—by working like a fiend, as all pioneers must do. And consider all that is in it. The headlong stampede to the new place; the money dashed down like counters for merest daily bread; the arrival of the piled cars whence the raw material of a city—men, lumber, and shingle—are shot on to the not yet nailed platform; the slashing out and pegging down of roads across the blank face of the wilderness; the heaving up amid shouts and yells of the city's one electric light—a raw sizzling arc atop of an unbarked pine pole; the sweating, jostling mob at the sale of town-lots; the roar of 'Let the woman have it!' that stops all bidding when the one other woman in the place puts her price on a plot; the packed real estate offices; the real estate agents themselves, lost novelists of prodigious imagination; the gorgeous pink and blue map of the town, hung up in the bar-room, with every railroad from Portland to Portland meeting in its heart; the misspelled curse against 'this dam hole in the ground' scrawled on the flank of a strayed freight-car by some man who had lost his money and gone away; the conferences at street corners of syndicates six hours established by men not twenty-five years old; the outspoken contempt for the next town, also 'on the boom,' and, therefore, utterly vile; the unceasing tramp of heavy feet on the board pavement, where stranger sometimes turns on stranger in an agony of conviction, and, shaking him by the shoulder, shouts in his ear, 'By G—d! Isn't it grand? Isn't it glorious?' and last, the sleep of utterly wornout men, three in each room of the shanty hotel: 'All meals two dollars. All drinks thirty-five cents. No washing done here. The manager not responsible for anything.' Does the bald catalogue of these

recitals leave you cold? It is possible; but it is also possible after three days in a new town to set the full half of a truck load of archbishops fighting for corner lots as they never fought for mitre or crozier. There is a contagion in a boom as irresistible as that of a panic in a theatre.

After a while things settle down, and then the carpenter, who is also an architect, can lay his bare arms across the bar and sell them to the highest bidder, for the houses are coming up like toadstools after rain. The men who do not build cheer those who do, in that building means backing your belief in your town—yours to you and peculiarly confound all other towns whatsoever! Behind the crowd of business men the weekly town paper plays as a stockwhip plays on a mob of cattle! There is honour, heaped, extravagant, imperial for the good—the employer of labour, the builder of stores, the spender of money; there is abuse, savage and outrageous, for the bad, the man who 'buys out of the town,' the man who intends to go, the sitter on the fence; with persuasion and invitation in prose, verse, and zincograph for all that outside world which prefers to live in cities other than Ours.

Now the editor, as often as not, begins as a mercenary and ends as a patriot. This, too, is all of a piece with human nature. A few years later, if Providence is good, comes the return of judicious investment. Perhaps the town has stood the test of boom, and that which was clapboard is now Milwaukee brick or dressed stone, vile in design but permanent. The shanty hotel is the Something House, with accommodation for two hundred guests. The manager who served you in his shirt-sleeves as his own hotel clerk, is gorgeous in broad-

cloth, and needs to be reminded of the first meeting. Suburban villas more or less adorn the flats, from which the liveliest fancy (and fancy was free in the early days) hung back. Horse-cars jingle where the prairie schooner used to stick fast in the mud-hole, scooped to that end opposite the saloon; and there is a Belt Electric Service paying fabulous dividends. Then, do you, feeling older than Methuselah and twice as important, go forth and patronize things in general, while the manager tells you exactly what sort of millionaire you would have been if you had 'stayed by the town.'

Or else—the bottom has tumbled out of the boom, and the town new made is dead—dead as a young man's corpse laid out in the morning. Success was not justified by success. Of ten thousand not three hundred remain, and these live in huts on the outskirts of the brick streets. The hotel, with its suites of musty rooms, is a big tomb; the factory chimneys are cold; the villas have no glass in them, and the fire-weed glows in the centre of the driveways, mocking the arrogant advertisements in the empty shops. There is nothing to do except to catch trout in the stream that was to have been defiled by the city sewage. A two-pounder lies fanning himself just in the cool of the main culvert, where the alders have crept up to the city wall. You pay your money and, more or less, you take your choice.

By the time that man has seen these things and a few others that go with a boom he may say that he has lived, and talk with his enemies in the gate. He has heard the Arabian Nights retold and knows the inward kernel of that romance, which some little folk say is

vanished. Here they lie in their false teeth, for Cortes is not dead, nor Drake, and Sir Philip Sydney dies every few months if you know where to look. The adventurers and captains courageous of old have only changed their dress a little and altered their employment to suit the world in which they move. Clive came down from Lobengula's country a few months ago protesting that there was an empire there, and finding very few that believed. Hastings studied a map of South Africa in a corrugated iron hut at Johannesburg ten years ago. Since then he has altered the map considerably to the advantage of the Empire, but the heart of the Empire is set on ballot-boxes and small lies. The illustrious Don Quixote to-day lives on the north coast of Australia where he has found the treasure of a sunken Spanish galleon. Now and again he destroys black fellows who hide under his bed to spear him. Young Hawkins, with a still younger Boscawen for his second, was till last year chasing slave-dhows round Tajurrah; they have sent him now to the Zanzibar coast to be grilled into an admiral; and the valorous Sandoval has been holding the 'Republic' of Mexico by the throat any time these fourteen years gone. The others, big men all and not very much afraid of responsibility, are selling horses, breaking trails, drinking sangaree, running railways beyond the timberline, swimming rivers, blowing up tree-stumps, and making cities where no cities were, in all the five quarters of the world. Only people would not believe this when you tell them. They are too near things and a great deal too well fed. So they say of the most cold-blooded realism: 'This is romance. How interesting!' And of over-handled thumb-marked realism: 'This is indeed romance!'.

It is the next century that, looking over its own, will see the heroes of our time clearly.

Meantime this earth of ours—we hold a fair slice of it so far—is full of wonders and miracles and mysteries and marvels, and, in default, it is good to go up and down seeing and hearing tell of them all.

ON ONE SIDE ONLY

NEW OXFORD, U.S.A., *June-July* 1892.

'THE truth is,' said the man in the train, 'that we live in a tropical country for three months of the year, only we won't recognize it. Look at this.' He handed over a long list of deaths from heat that enlivened the newspapers. All the cities where men live at breaking-strain were sending in their butcher-bills, and the papers of the cities, themselves apostles of the Gospel of Rush, were beseeching their readers to keep cool and not to overwork themselves while the hot wave was upon them. The rivers were patched and barred with sun-dried pebbles; the logs and loggers were drought-bound somewhere up the Connecticut; and the grass at the side of the track was burned in a hundred places by the sparks from locomotives. Men—hatless, coatless, and gasping—lay in the shade of that station where only a few months ago the glass stood at 30 below zero. Now the readings were 98 degrees in the shade. Main Street—do you remember Main Street of a little village locked up in the snow this spring?[1]—had given up the business of life, and an American flag with some politician's name printed across the bottom hung down across the street as stiff as a board. There were men with fans and

[1] See "In Sight of Monadnock"

alpaca coats curled up in splint chairs in the verandah of the one hotel—among them an ex-President of the United States. He completed the impression that the furniture of the entire country had been turned out of doors for summer cleaning in the absence of all the inhabitants. Nothing looks so hopelessly 'ex' as a President 'returned to stores.' The stars and stripes signified that the Presidential Campaign had opened in Main Street—opened and shut up again. Politics evaporate at summer heat when all hands are busy with the last of the hay, and, as the farmers put it, 'Vermont's bound to go Republican.' The custom of the land is to drag the scuffle and dust of an election over several months—to the improvement of business and manners; but the noise of that war comes faintly up the valley of the Connecticut and is lost among the fiddling of the locusts. Their music puts, as it were, a knife-edge upon the heat of the day. In truth, it is a tropical country for the time being. Thunderstorms prowl and growl round the belted hills, spit themselves away in a few drops of rain, and leave the air more dead than before. In the woods, where even the faithful springs are beginning to run low, the pines and balsams have thrown out all their fragrance upon the heat and wait for the wind to bring news of the rain. The clematis, wild carrot, and all the gipsy-flowers camped by sufferance between fence line and road rut are masked in white dust, and the goldenrod of the pastures that are burned to flax-colour burns too like burnished brass. A pillar of dust on the long hog-back of the road across the hills shows where a team is lathering between farms, and the roofs of the wooden houses flicker in the haze of their own heat. Overhead the chicken-hawk is the only

creature at work, and his shrill kite-like call sends the gaping chickens from the dust-bath in haste to their mothers. The red squirrel as usual feigns business of importance among the butternuts, but this is pure priggishness. When the passer-by is gone he ceases chattering and climbs back to where the little breezes can stir his tail plumes. From somewhere under the lazy fold of a meadow comes the drone of a mowing-machine among the hay—its *whurr-ao*, and the grunt of the tired horses.

Houses are only meant to eat and sleep in. The rest of life is lived at full length in the verandah. When traffic is brisk three whole teams will pass that verandah in one day, and it is necessary to exchange news about the weather and the prospects for oats. When oats are in there will be slack time on the farm, and the farmers will seriously think of doing the hundred things that they have let slide during the summer. They will undertake this and that, 'when they get around to it.' The phrase translated is the exact equivalent to the *mañana* of the Spaniard, the *kul hojaiga* of Upper India, the *yuroshii* of the Japanese, and the long drawled *taihoa* of the Maori. The only person who 'gets around' in this weather is the summer boarder—the refugee from the burning cities of the Plain, and she is generally a woman. She walks, and botanizes, and kodaks, and strips the bark off the white birch to make blue-ribboned waste-paper baskets, and the farmer regards her with wonder. More does he wonder still at the city clerk in a blazer, who has two weeks' holiday in the year and, apparently, unlimited money, which he earns in the easiest possible way by 'sitting at a desk and writing.' The farmer's wife sees the fashions of

the summer boarder, and between them man and woman get a notion of the beauties of city life for which their children may live to blame them. The blazer and the town-made gown are innocent recruiting sergeants for the city brigades; and since one man's profession is ever a mystery to his fellow, blazer and gown believe that the farmer must be happy and content. A summer resort is one of the thousand windows whence to watch the thousand aspects of life in the Atlantic States. Remember that between June and September it is the desire of all who can to get away from the big cities—not on account of wantonness, as people leave London—but because of actual heat. So they get away in their millions with their millions—the wives of the rich men for five clear months, the others for as long as they can; and, like drawing like, they make communities set by set, breed by breed, division by division, over the length and breadth of the land—from Maine and the upper reaches of the Saguenay, through the mountains and hot springs of half-a-dozen interior States, out and away to Sitka in steamers. Then they spend money on hotel bills, among ten thousand farms, on private companies who lease and stock land for sporting purposes, on yachts and canoes, bicycles, rods, chalets, cottages, reading-circles, camps, tents, and all the luxuries they know. But the luxury of rest most of them do not know; and the telephone and telegraph are faithfully dragged after them, lest their men-folk should for a moment forget the ball and chain at foot.

For sadness with laughter at bottom there are few things to compare with the sight of a coatless, muddy-booted millionaire, his hat adorned with trout-flies, and

a string of small fish in his hand, clawing wildly at the telephone of some back-of-beyond 'health resort.' Thus:

'Hello! Hello! Yes. Who's there? Oh, all right. Go ahead. Yes, it's me! Hey, what? Repeat. Sold for *how* much? Forty-four and a half? Repeat. No! I *told* you to hold on. What? What? *Who* bought at that? Say, hold a minute. Cable the other side. No. Hold on. I'll come down.' (*Business with watch.*) 'Tell Schaefer I'll see him to-morrow.' (*Over his shoulder to his wife, who wears half-hoop diamond rings at* 10 A.M.): 'Lizzie, where's my grip? I've got to go down.'

And he goes down to eat in a hotel and sleep in his shut-up house. Men are as scarce at most of the summer places as they are in Indian hill-stations in late April. The women tell you that they can't get away, and if they did they would only be miserable to get back. Now whether this wholesale abandonment of husbands by wives is wholesome let those who know the beauties of the Anglo-Indian system settle for themselves.

That both men and women need rest very badly a glance at the crowded hotel tables makes plain—so plain, indeed, that the foreigner who has not been taught that fuss and worry are in themselves honourable wishes sometimes he could put the whole unrestful crowd to sleep for seventeen hours a day. I have inquired of not less than five hundred men and women in various parts of the State why they broke down and looked so gash. And the men said: 'If you don't keep up with the procession in America you are left'; and the women smiled an evil smile and answered that no outsider yet had discovered the real cause of their

worry and strain, or why their lives were arranged to work with the largest amount of friction in the shortest given time. Now, the men can be left to their own folly, but the cause of the women's trouble has been revealed to me. It is the thing called 'Help' which is no help. In the multitude of presents that the American man has given to the American woman (for details see daily papers) he has forgotten or is unable to give her good servants, and that sordid trouble runs equally through the household of the millionaire or the flat of the small city man. 'Yes, it's easy enough to laugh,' said one woman passionately, 'we are worn out, and our children are worn out too, and we're always worrying, I know it. What can we do? If you stay here you'll know that this is the land of all the luxuries and none of the necessities. You'll know and then you won't laugh. You'll know why women are said to take their husbands to boarding-houses and never have homes. You'll know what an Irish Catholic means. The men won't get up and attend to these things, but *we* would. If *we* had female suffrage, we'd shut the door to *all* the Irish and throw it open to *all* the Chinese, and let the women have a little protection.' It was the cry of a soul worn thin with exasperation, but it was truth. To-day I do not laugh any more at the race that depends on inefficient helot races for its inefficient service. When next, you, housekeeping in England differ with the respectable, amiable, industrious sixteen-pound maid, who wears a cap and says 'Ma'am,' remember the pauper labour of America—the wives of the sixty million kings who have no subjects. No man could get a thorough knowledge of the problem in one lifetime, but he could guess at the size and the import of it after

he has descended into the arena and wrestled with the Swede and the Dane and the German and the unspeakable Celt. Then he perceives how good for the breed it must be that a man should thresh himself to pieces in naked competition with his neighbour while his wife struggles unceasingly over primitive savagery in the kitchen. In India sometimes when a famine is at hand the life of the land starts up before your eyes in all its bareness and bitter stress. Here, in spite of the trimmings and the frillings, it refuses to be subdued and the clamour and the clatter of it are loud above all other sounds—as sometimes the thunder of disorganized engines stops conversations along the decks of a liner, and in the inquiring eyes of the passengers you read the question—'This thing is made and paid to bear us to port quietly. Why does it not do so?' Only here the rattle of the badly-put-together machine is always in the ears, though men and women run about with labour-saving appliances and gospels of 'power through repose,' tinkering and oiling and making more noise. The machine is new. Some day it is going to be the finest machine in the world. To the ranks of the amateur artificers, therefore, are added men with notebooks tapping at every nut and bolthead, fiddling with the glands, registering revolutions, and crying out from time to time that this or that is or is not 'distinctively American.' Meantime, men and women die unnecessarily in the wheels, and they are said to have fallen 'in the battle of life.'

The God Who sees us all die knows that there is far too much of that battle, but we do not, and so continue worshipping the knife that cuts and the wheel that breaks us, as blindly as the outcast sweeper worships

Lal-Beg the Glorified Broom that is the incarnation of his craft. But the sweeper has sense enough not to kill himself, and to be proud of it, with sweeping.

A foreigner can do little good by talking of these things; for the same lean dry blood that breeds the fever of unrest breeds also the savage parochial pride that squeals under a steady stare or a pointed finger. Among themselves the people of the Eastern cities admit that they and their womenfolk overwork grievously and go to pieces very readily, and that the consequences for the young stock are unpleasant indeed; but before the stranger they prefer to talk about the future of their mighty continent (which has nothing to do with the case) and to call aloud on Baal of the Dollars—to catalogue their lines, mines, telephones, banks, and cities, and all the other shells, buttons, and counters that they have made their gods over them. Now a nation does not progress upon its brain-pan, as some books would have us believe, but upon its belly as did the Serpent of old; and in the very long run the work of the brain comes to be gathered in by a slow-footed breed that have unimaginative stomachs and the nerves that know their places.

All this is very consoling from the alien's point of view. He perceives, with great comfort, that out of strain is bred impatience in the shape of a young bundle of nerves, who is about as undisciplined an imp as the earth can show. Out of impatience, grown up, habituated to violent and ugly talk, and the impatience and recklessness of his neighbours, is begotten lawlessness, encouraged by laziness and suppressed by violence when it becomes insupportable. Out of lawlessness is bred rebellion (and that fruit has been tasted once already),

and out of rebellion comes profit to those who wait. He hears of the power of the People who, through rank slovenliness, neglect to see that their laws are soberly enforced from the beginning; and these people, not once or twice in a year, but many times within a month, go out in the open streets and with a maximum waste of power and shouting strangle other people with ropes. They are, he is told, law-abiding citizens who have executed 'the will of the people'; which is as though a man should leave his papers unsorted for a year and then smash his desk with an axe, crying, 'Am I not orderly?' He hears lawyers, otherwise sane and matured, defend this pig-jobbing murder on the grounds that 'the people stand behind the law'—the law that they never administered. He sees a right, at present only half—but still half—conceded to anticipate the law in one's own interests; and nervous impatience (always nerves) forejudging the suspect in jail, the prisoner in the dock, and the award between nation and nation ere it is declared. He knows that the maxim in London, Yokohoma, and Hongkong in doing business with the pure-bred American is to keep him waiting, for the reason that forced inaction frets the man to a lather, as standing in harness frets a half-broken horse. He comes across a thousand little peculiarities of speech, manner, and thought—matters of nerve and stomach developed by everlasting friction—and they are all just the least little bit in the world lawless, no more than the restless clicking together of horns in a herd of restless cattle, but certainly no less. They are all good—good for those who wait.

On the other hand, to consider the matter more humanly, there are thousands of delightful men and

women going to pieces for the pitiful reason that if they do not keep up with the procession, 'they are left.' And they are left—in clothes that have no back to them, among mounds of smilax. And young men—chance-met in the streets, talk to you about their nerves which are things no young man should know anything about; and the friends of your friends go down with nervous prostration, and the people overheard in the trains talk about their nerves and the nerves of their relatives; and the little children must needs have their nerves attended to ere their milk teeth are shed, and the middle-aged women and the middle-aged men have got them too, and the old men lose the dignity of their age in an indecent restlessness, and the advertisements in the papers go to show that this sweeping list is no lie. Atop of the fret and the stampede the tingling self-consciousness of a new people makes them take a sort of perverted pride in the futile racket that sends up the death-rate—a child's delight in the blaze and the dust of the March of Progress. Is it not 'distinctively American'? It is, and it is not. If the cities were all America, as they pretend, fifty years would see the March of Progress brought to a standstill, as a locomotive is stopped by heated bearings. . . .

Down in the meadow the mowing-machine has checked, and the horses are shaking themselves. The last of the sunlight leaves the top of Monadnock, and four miles away Main Street lights her electric lamps. It is band-night in Main Street, and the folks from Putney, from Marlboro', from Guildford, and even New Fane will drive in their well-filled waggons to hear music and look at the ex-President. Over the shoulder of the meadow two men come up very slowly, their hats off

and their arms swinging loosely at their sides. They do not hurry, they have not hurried, and they never will hurry, for they are of country—bankers of the flesh and blood of the ever bankrupt cities. Their children may yet be pale summer boarders, as the boarders, city-bred weeds, may take over their farms. From the plough to the pavement goes man, but to the plough he returns at last.

'Going to supper?'

'Ye-ep,' very slowly across the wash of the uncut grass.

'Say, that corncrib wants painting.'

'Do that when we get around to it.'

They go off through the dusk, without farewell or salutation steadily as their own steers. And there are a few millions of them—unhandy men to cross in their ways, set, silent, indirect in speech, and as impenetrable as that other Eastern farmer who is the bedrock of another land. They do not appear in the city papers, they are not much heard in the streets, and they tell very little in the outsider's estimate of America.

And *they* are the American.

LEAVES FROM A WINTER NOTE-BOOK
(1895)

WE HAD walked abreast of the year from the very beginning, and that was when the first blood-root came up between the patches of April snow, while yet the big drift at the bottom of the meadow held fast. In the shadow of the woods and under the blown pine-needles clots of snow lay till far into May, but neither the season nor the flowers took any note of them, and, before we were well sure Winter had gone, the lackeys of my Lord Baltimore in their new liveries came to tell us that Summer was in the valley, and please might they nest at the bottom of the garden?

Followed, Summer, angry, fidgety, and nervous, with the corn and tobacco to ripen in five short months, the pastures to reclothe, and the fallen leaves to hide away under new carpets. Suddenly, in the middle of her work, on a stuffy-still July day, she called a wind out of the Northwest, a wind blown under an arch of steel-bellied clouds, a wicked bitter wind with a lacing of hail to it, a wind that came and was gone in less than ten minutes, but blocked the roads with fallen trees, toppled over a barn, and—blew potatoes out of the ground! When that was done, a white cloud shaped like a dumb-bell whirled down the valley across the evening blue, roaring and twisting and twisting and

roaring all alone by itself. A West Indian hurricane could not have been quicker on its feet than our little cyclone, and when the house rose a-tiptoe, like a cockerel in act to crow, and a sixty-foot elm went by the board, and that which had been a dusty road became a roaring torrent all in three minutes, we felt that the New England Summer had creole blood in her veins. She went away, red-faced and angry to the last, slamming all the doors of the hills behind her, and Autumn, who is a lady, took charge.

No pen can describe the turning of the leaves—the insurrection of the tree-people against the waning year. A little maple began it, flaming blood-red of a sudden where he stood against the dark green of a pine-belt. Next morning there was an answering signal from the swamp where the sumacs grow. Three days later, the hill-sides as far as the eye could range were afire, and the roads paved, with crimson and gold. Then a wet wind blew, and ruined all the uniforms of that gorgeous host; and the oaks, who had held themselves in reserve, buckled on their dull and bronzed cuirasses and stood it out stiffly to the last blown leaf, till nothing remained but pencil-shading of bare boughs, and one could see into the most private heart of the woods.

Frost may be looked for till the middle of May and after the middle of September, so Summer has little time for enamel-work or leaf-embroidery. Her sisters bring the gifts—Spring, wind-flowers, Solomon's-Seal, Dutchman's-breeches, Quaker-ladies, and trailing arbutus, that smells as divinely as the true May. Autumn has goldenrod and all the tribe of asters, pink, lilac, and creamy white, by the double armful. When these go

the curtain comes down, and whatever Powers shift the scenery behind, work without noise. In tropic lands you can hear the play of growth and decay at the back of the night-silences. Even in England the tides of the winter air have a set and a purpose; but here they are dumb altogether. The very last piece of benchwork this season was the trailed end of a blackberry-vine, most daringly conventionalized in hammered iron, flung down on the frosty grass an instant before people came to look. The blue bloom of the furnace was still dying along the central rib, and the side sprays were cherry red, even as they had been lifted from the charcoal. It was a detail, evidently, of some invisible gate in the woods; but we never found that workman, though he had left the mark of his cloven foot as plainly as any strayed deer. In a week the heavy frosts with scythes and hammers had slashed and knocked down all the road-side growth and the kindly bushes that veil the drop off the unfenced track.

There the seasons stopped awhile. Autumn was gone, Winter was not. We had Time dealt out to us—more, clear, fresh Time—grace-days to enjoy. The white wooden farmhouses were banked round two feet deep with dried leaves or earth, and the choppers went out to get ready next year's stores of wood. Now, chopping is an art, and the chopper in all respects an artist. He makes his own axe-helve, and for each man there is but one perfect piece of wood in all the world. This he never finds, but the likest substitute is trimmed and balanced and poised to that ideal. One man I know has evolved very nearly the weapon of Umslopogaas. It is almost straight, lapped at the butt with leather, amazingly springy, and carries a two-edged

blade for splitting and chopping. If his Demon be with him—and what artist can answer for all his moods?—he will cause a tree to fall upon any stick or stone that you choose, uphill or down, to the right or to the left. Artist-like, however, he explains that that is nothing. Any fool can play with a tree in the open, but it needs the craftsman to bring a tree down in thick timber and do no harm. To see an eighty-foot maple, four feet in the butt, dropped, deftly as a fly is cast, in the only place where it will not outrage the feelings and swipe off the tops of fifty juniors, is a revelation. White pine, hemlock, and spruce share this country with maples, black and white birches, and beech. Maple seems to have few preferences, and the white birches straggle and shiver on the outskirts of every camp; but the pines hold together in solid regiments, sending out skirmishers to invade a neglected pasture on the first opportunity. There is no overcoat warmer than the pines in a gale when the woods for miles round are singing like cathedral organs, and the first snow of the year powders the rock ledges.

The mosses and lichens, green, sulphur, and amber, stud the copper floor of needles, where the feathery ground-pine runs aimlessly to and fro along the ground, spelling out broken words of half-forgotten charms. There are checker-berries on the outskirts of the wood, where the partridge (he is a ruffed grouse really) dines, and by the deserted logging-roads toadstools of all colours sprout on the decayed stumps. Wherever a green or blue rock lifts from the hillside, the needles have been packed and matted round its base, till, when the sunshine catches them, stone and setting together look no meaner than turquoise in dead gold. The

woods are full of colour, belts and blotches of it, the colours of the savage—red, yellow, and blue. Yet in their lodges there is very little life, for the wood-people do not readily go into the shadows. The squirrels have their business among the beeches and hickories by the road-side, where they can watch the traffic and talk. We have no gray ones hereabouts (they are good to eat and suffer for it), but five reds live in a hickory hard by, and no weather puts them to sleep. The woodchuck, a marmot and a strategist, makes his burrow in the middle of a field, where he must see you ere you see him. Now and again a dog manages to cut him off his base, and the battle is worth crossing fields to watch. But the woodchuck turned in long ago, and will not be out till April. The coon lives —well, no one seems to know particularly where Brer Coon lives, but when the Hunter's Moon is large and full he descends into the corn-lands, and men chase him with dogs for his fur, which makes the finest kind of overcoat, and his flesh, which tastes like chickens. He cries at night sorrowfully as though a child were lost.

They seem to kill, for one reason or other, everything that moves in this land. Hawks, of course; eagles for their rarity; foxes for their pelts; red-shouldered blackbirds and Baltimore orioles because they are pretty, and the other small things for sport—French fashion. You can get a rifle of a kind for twelve shillings, and if your neighbour be fool enough to post notices forbidding 'hunting' and fishing, you naturally seek his woods. So the country is very silent and unalive.

There are, however, bears within a few miles, as

you will see from this notice, picked up at the local tobacconist's:

JOHNNY GET YOUR GUN! BEAR HUNT!

As bears are too numerous in the town of Peltyville Corners, Vt., the hunters of the surrounding towns are invited to participate in a grand hunt to be held on Blue Mountains in the town of Peltyville Corners, Vt., Wednesday, Nov. 8th, if pleasant. If not, first fine day. Come one, come all!

They went, but it was the bear that would not participate. The notice was printed at somebody's Electric Print Establishment. Queer mixture, isn't it?

The bear does not run large as a rule, but he has a weakness for swine and calves which brings punishment. Twelve hours' rail and a little marching take you up to the moose-country; and twenty-odd miles from here as the crow flies you come to virgin timber, where trappers live, and where there is a Lost Pond that many have found once but can never find again.

Men, who are of one blood with sheep, have followed their friends and the railway along the river valleys where the towns are. Across the hills the inhabitants are few, and, outside their State, little known. They withdraw from society in November if they live on the uplands, coming down in May as the snow gives leave. Not much more than a generation ago these farms made their own clothes, soap, and candles, and killed their own meat thrice a year, beef, veal, and pig, and sat still between-times. Now they buy shop-made clothes, patent soaps, and kerosene; and it is among their tents that the huge red and gilt Biographies of Presidents, and the twenty-pound family Bible, with illuminated

marriage-registers, mourning-cards, baptismal certificates, and hundreds of genuine steel-engravings sell best. Here, too, off the main travelled roads, the wandering quack—Patent Electric Pills, nerve cures, etc.—divides the field with the seed and fruit man and the seller of cattle-boluses. They dose themselves a good deal, I fancy, for it is a poor family that does not know all about nervous-prostration. So the quack drives a pair of horses and a gaily painted waggon with a hood, and sometimes takes his wife with him. Once only have I met a pedlar afoot. He was an old man, shaken with palsy, and he pushed a thing exactly like a pauper's burial-cart, selling pins, tape, scents, and flavourings. You helped yourself, for his hands had no direction, and he told a long tale in which the deeding away of a farm to one of his family was mixed up with pride at the distances he still could cover daily. As much as six miles sometimes. He was no Lear, as the gift of the farm might suggest, but sealed of the tribe of the Wandering Jew—a tremulous old giddy-gaddy. There are many such rovers, gelders of colts and the like, who work a long beat, south to Virginia almost, and north to the frontier, paying with talk and gossip for their entertainment.

Yet tramps are few, and that is well, for the American article answers almost exactly to the vagrant and criminal tribes of India, being a predatory ruffian who knows too much to work. Bad place to beg in after dark—on a farm—very—is Vermont. Gypsies pitch their camp by the river in the spring, and cooper horses in the manner of their tribe. They have the gypsy look and some of the old gypsy names, but say that they are largely mixed with Gentile blood.

Winter has chased all these really interesting people south, and in a few weeks, if we have anything of a snow, the back farms will be unvisited save by the doctor's hooded sleigh. It is no child's play to hold a practice here through the winter months, when the drifts are really formed, and a pair can drop in up to their saddle-pads. Four horses a day some of them use, and use up—for they are good men.

Now in the big silence of the snow is born, perhaps, not a little of New England conscience which her children write about. There is much time to think, and thinking is a highly dangerous business. Conscience, fear, undigested reading, and, it may be, not too well cooked food, have full swing. A man, and more particularly a woman, can easily hear strange voices—the Word of the Lord rolling between the dead hills; may see visions and dream dreams; get revelations and an outpouring of the spirit, and end (such things have been) lamentably enough in those big houses by the Connecticut River which have been tenderly christened The Retreat. Hate breeds as well as religion—the deep, instriking hate between neighbours, that is born of a hundred little things added up, brooded over, and hatched by the stove when two or three talk together in the long evenings. It would be very interesting to get the statistics of revivals and murders, and find how many of them have been committed in the spring. But for undistracted people winter is one long delight of the eye. In other lands one knows the snow as a nuisance that comes and goes, and is sorely man-handled and messed at the last. Here it lies longer on the ground than any crop—from November to April sometimes—and for three months life goes to the tune of sleigh-bells,

which are not, as a Southern visitor once hinted, ostentation, but safeguards. The man who drives without them is not loved. The snow is a faithful barometer, foretelling good sleighing or stark confinement to barracks. It is all the manure the stony pastures receive; it cloaks the ground and prevents the frost bursting pipes; it is the best—I had almost written the only—road-maker in the States. On the other side it can rise up in the night and bid the people sit still as the Egyptians. It can stop mails; wipe out all time-tables; extinguish the lamps of twenty towns, and kill man within sight of his own door-step or hearing of his cattle unfed. No one who has been through even so modified a blizzard as New England can produce talks lightly of the snow. Imagine eight-and-forty hours of roaring wind, the thermometer well down towards zero, scooping and gouging across a hundred miles of newly fallen snow. The air is full of stinging shot, and at ten yards the trees are invisible. The foot slides on a reef, polished and black as obsidian, where the wind has skinned an exposed corner of road down to the dirt ice of early winter. The next step ends hip-deep and over, for here an unseen wall is banking back the rush of the singing drifts. A scarped slope rises sheer across the road. The wind shifts a point or two, and all sinks down, like sand in the hour-glass, leaving a pot-hole of whirling whiteness. There is a lull, and you can see the surface of the fields settling furiously in one direction—a tide that spurts from between the tree-boles. The hollows of the pasture fill while you watch; empty, fill, and discharge anew. The rock-ledges show the bare flank of a storm-chased liner for a moment, and whitening, duck under. Irresponsible snow-devils dance

by the lee of a barn where three gusts meet, or stagger out into the open till they are cut down by the main wind. At the worst of the storm there is neither Heaven nor Earth, but only a swizzle into which a man may be brewed. Distances grow to nightmare scale, and that which in the summer was no more than a minute's bare-headed run, is half-an-hour's gasping struggle, each foot won between the lulls. Then do the heavy-timbered barns talk like ships in a cross-sea, beam working against beam. The winter's hay is ribbed over with long lines of snow dust blown between the boards, and far below in the byre the oxen clash their horns and moan uneasily.

The next day is blue, breathless, and most utterly still. The farmers shovel a way to their beasts, bind with chains their large ploughshares to their heaviest wood-sled and take of oxen as many as Allah has given them. These they drive, and the dragging share makes a furrow in which a horse can walk, and the oxen, by force of repeatedly going in up to their bellies, presently find foothold. The finished road is a deep double gutter between three-foot walls of snow, where, by custom, the heavier vehicle has the right of way. The lighter man when he turns out must drop waist-deep and haul his unwilling beast into the drift, leaving Providence to steady the sleigh.

In the towns, where they choke and sputter and gasp, the big snow turns to horsepondine. With us it stays still; the wind, sun, and rain get to work upon it, lest the texture and colour should not change daily. Rain makes a granulated crust over all, in which white shagreen the trees are faintly reflected. Heavy mists go up and down, and create a sort of mirage, till they settle and

pack round the iron-tipped hills, and then you know how the moon must look to an inhabitant of it. At twilight, again, the beaten-down ridges and laps and folds of the uplands take on the likeness of wet sand—some huge and melancholy beach at the world's end—and when day meets night it is all goblin country. To westward, the last of the spent day—rust-red and pearl, illimitable levels of shore waiting for the tide to turn again. To eastward, black night among the valleys, and on the rounded hill in slopes a hard glare that is not so much light as snail-slime from the moon. Once or twice perhaps in the winter the Northern Lights come out between the moon and the sun, so that to the two unearthly lights is added the leap and flare of the Aurora Borealis.

In January or February come the great ice-storms, when every branch, blade, and trunk is coated with frozen rain, so that you can touch nothing truly. The spikes of the pines are sunk into pear-shaped crystals, and each fence-post is miraculously hilted with diamonds. If you bend a twig, the icing cracks like varnish, and a half-inch branch snaps off at the lightest tap. If wind and sun open the day together, the eye cannot look steadily at the splendour of this jewellery. The woods are full of the clatter of arms; the ringing of bucks' horns in flight; the stampede of mailed feet up and down the glades; and a great dust of battle is puffed out into the open, till the last of the ice is beaten away and the cleared branches take up their regular chant.

Again the mercury drops twenty and more below zero, and the very trees swoon. The snow turns to French chalk, squeaking under the heel, and their breath cloaks the oxen in rime. At night a tree's heart

will break in him with a groan. According to the books, the frost has split something, but it is a fearful sound, this grunt as of a man stunned.

Winter that is winter in earnest does not allow cattle and horses to play about the fields, so everything comes home; and since no share can break ground to any profit for some five months, there would seem to be very little to do. As a matter of fact, country interests at all seasons are extensive and peculiar, and the day is not long enough for them when you take out that time which a self-respecting man needs to turn himself round in. Consider! The solid undisturbed hours stand about one like ramparts. At a certain time the sun will rise. At another hour, equally certain, he will set. This much we know. Why, in the name of Reason, therefore, should we vex ourselves with vain exertions? An occasional visitor from the Cities of the Plains comes up panting to do things. He is set down to listen to the normal beat of his own heart—a sound that very few men have heard. In a few days, when the lather of impatience has dried, he ceases to talk of 'getting there' or 'being left.' He does not desire to accomplish matters 'right away,' nor does he look at his watch from force of habit, but keeps it where it should be—in his stomach. At the last he goes back to his beleaguered city, unwillingly, partially civilised, soon to be resavaged by the clash of a thousand wars whose echo does not reach here.

The air which kills germs dries out the very newspapers. They might be of to-morrow or a hundred years ago. They have nothing to do with to-day—the long, full, sunlit to-day. Our interests are not on the same scale as theirs, perhaps, but much more complex.

The movement of a foreign power, an alien sleigh on this Pontic shore must be explained and accounted for, or this public's heart will burst with unsatisfied curiosity. If it be Buck Davis, with the white mare that he traded his colt for, and the practically new sleigh-robe that he bought at Sewell auction, *why* does Buck Davis, who lives on the river flats, cross our hills, unless Murder Hollow be blockaded with snow, or unless he has turkeys for sale? *But* Buck Davis with turkeys would surely have stopped here, unless he were selling a large stock in town. A wail from the sacking at the back of the sleigh tells the tale. It is a winter calf, and Buck Davis is going to sell it for one dollar to the Boston Market where it will be turned into potted chicken. This leaves the mystery of his change of route unexplained. After two days' sitting on tenter-hooks it is discovered, obliquely, that Buck went to pay a door-yard call on Orson Butler, who lives on the saeter where the wind and the bald granite scaurs fight it out together. Kirk Demming had brought Orson news of a fox at the back of Black Mountain, and Orson's eldest son, going to Murder Hollow with wood for the new barn floor that the widow Amidon is laying down, told Buck that he might as well come round to talk to his father about the pig. *But* old man Butler meant fox-hunting from the first, and what he wanted to do was to borrow Buck's dog, who had been duly brought over with the calf, and left on the mountain. No, old man Butler did *not* go hunting alone, but waited till Buck came back from town. Buck sold the calf for a dollar and a quarter and not for seventy-five cents as was falsely asserted by interested parties. *Then* the two went after the fox together. This much learned, every-

body breathes freely, if life has not been complicated in the meantime by more strange counter-marchings.

Five or six sleighs a day we can understand, if we know why they are abroad; but a metropolitan rush of traffic disturbs and excites.

LETTERS TO THE FAMILY

1908

These letters appeared in newspapers during the spring of 1908 after a trip to Canada undertaken in the autumn of 1907. They are now reprinted without alteration.

The Road to Quebec.
A People at Home.
Cities and Spaces.
Newspapers and Democracy.
Labour.
The Fortunate Towns.
Mountains and the Pacific.
A Conclusion.

THE ROAD TO QUEBEC
(1907)

IT MUST be hard for those who do not live there to realize the cross between canker and blight that has settled on England for the last couple of years. The effects of it are felt throughout the Empire, but at headquarters we taste the stuff in the very air, just as one tastes iodoform in the cups and bread-and-butter of a hospital-tea. So far as one can come at things in the present fog, every form of unfitness, general or specialized, born or created, during the last generation has combined in one big trust—a majority of all the minorities—to play the game of Government. Now that the game ceases to amuse, nine-tenths of the English who set these folk in power are crying: 'If we had only known what they were going to do we should never have voted for them!'

Yet, as the rest of the Empire perceived at the time, these men were always perfectly explicit as to their emotions and intentions. They said first, and drove it home by large pictures, that no possible advantage to the Empire outweighed the cruelty and injustice of charging the British working man two-pence halfpenny a week on some of his provisions. Incidentally they explained, so that all Earth except England heard it, that the Army was wicked; much of the Navy unnecessary; that half the population of one of the

Colonies practised slavery, with torture, for the sake of private gain, and that the mere name of Empire wearied and sickened them. On these grounds they stood to save England; on these grounds they were elected, with what seemed like clear orders to destroy the blood-stained fetish of Empire as soon as possible. The present mellow condition of Ireland, Egypt, India, and South Africa is proof of their honesty and obedience. Over and above this, their mere presence in office produced all along our lines the same moral effect as the presence of an incompetent master in a classroom. Paper pellets, books, and ink began to fly; desks were thumped; dirty pens were jabbed into those trying to work; rats and mice were set free amid squeals of exaggerated fear; and, as usual, the least desirable characters in the forms were loudest to profess noble sentiments, and most eloquent grief at being misjudged. Still, the English are not happy, and the unrest and slackness increase.

On the other hand, which is to our advantage, the isolation of the unfit in one political party has thrown up the extremists in what the Babu called 'all their naked *cui bono*.' These last are after satisfying the two chief desires of primitive man by the very latest gadgets in scientific legislation. But how to get free food, and free—shall we say—love? within the four corners of an Act of Parliament without giving the game too grossly, worries them a little. It is easy enough to laugh at this, but we are all so knit together nowadays that a rot at what is called 'headquarters' may spread like bubonic, with every steamer. I went across to Canada the other day, for a few weeks, mainly to escape the Blight, and also to see what our Eldest Sister was doing.

Have you ever noticed that Canada has to deal in the lump with most of the problems that afflict us others severally? For example, she has the Double-Language, Double-Law, Double-Politics drawback in a worse form than South Africa, because, unlike our Dutch, her French cannot well marry outside their religion, and they take their orders from Italy—less central, sometimes, than Pretoria or Stellenbosch. She has, too, something of Australia's labour fuss, minus Australia's isolation, but plus the open and secret influence of 'Labour,' entrenched, with arms, and high explosives on neighbouring soil. To complete the parallel, she keeps, tucked away behind mountains, a trifle of land called British Columbia, which resembles New Zealand; and New Zealanders who do not find much scope for young enterprise in their own country are drifting up to British Columbia already.

Canada has in her time known calamity more serious than floods, frost, drought, and fire—and has macadamized some stretches of her road towards nationhood with the broken hearts of two generations. That is why one can discuss with Canadians of the old stock matters which an Australian or New Zealander could no more understand than a healthy child understands death. Truly we are an odd Family! Australia and New Zealand (the Maori War not counted) got everything for nothing. South Africa gave everything and got less than nothing. Canada has given and taken all along the line for nigh on three hundred years, and in some respects is the wisest, as she should be the happiest, of us all. She seems to be curiously unconscious of her position in the Empire, perhaps because she has lately been talked at, or down to, by her neighbours.

You know how at any gathering of our men from all quarters it is tacitly conceded that Canada takes the lead in the Imperial game. To put it roughly, she saw the goal more than ten years ago, and has been working the ball towards it ever since. That is why her inaction at the last Imperial Conference made people who were interested in the play wonder why she, of all of us, chose to brigade herself with General Botha and to block the forward rush. I, too, asked that question of many. The answer was something like this: 'We saw that England wasn't taking anything just then. Why should we have laid ourselves open to be snubbed worse than we were? We sat still.' Quite reasonable—almost too convincing. There was really no need that Canada should have done other than she did—except that she was the Eldest Sister, and more was expected of her. She is a little too modest.

We discussed this, first of all, under the lee of a wet deck-house in mid-Atlantic; man after man cutting in and out of the talk as he sucked at his damp tobacco. The passengers were nearly all unmixed Canadian, mostly born in the Maritime Provinces, where their fathers speak of 'Canada' as Sussex speaks of 'England,' but scattered about their business throughout the wide Dominion. They were at ease, too, among themselves, with that pleasant intimacy that stamps every branch of Our Family and every boat that it uses on its homeward way. A Cape liner is all the sub-Continent from the Equator to Simon's Town; an Orient boat is Australasian throughout, and a C.P.R. steamer cannot be confused with anything except Canada. It is a pity one may not be born in four places at once, and then one would understand the

half-tones and asides, and the allusions of all our Family life without waste of precious time. These big men, smoking in the drizzle, had hope in their eyes, belief in their tongues, and strength in their hearts. I used to think miserably of other boats at the South end of this ocean—a quarter full of people deprived of these things. A young man kindly explained to me how Canada had suffered through what he called 'the Imperial connection'; how she had been diversely bedevilled by English statesmen for political reasons. He did not know his luck, nor would he believe me when I tried to point it out; but a nice man in a plaid (who knew South Africa) lurched round the corner and fell on him with facts and imagery which astonished the patriotic young mind. The plaid finished his outburst with the uncontradicted statement that the English were mad. All our talks ended on that note.

It was an experience to move in the midst of a new contempt. One understands and accepts the bitter scorn of the Dutch, the hopeless anger of one's own race in South Africa is also part of the burden; but the Canadian's profound, sometimes humorous, often bewildered, always polite contempt of the England of to-day cuts a little. You see, that late unfashionable war[1] was very real to Canada. She sent several men to it, and a thinly populated country is apt to miss her dead more than a crowded one. When, from her point of view, they have died for no conceivable advantage, moral or material, her business instincts, or it may be mere animal love of her children, cause her to remember and resent quite a long time after the thing should be

[1]Boer "war" of 1899–1902.

decently forgotten. I was shocked at the vehemence with which some men (and women) spoke of the affair. Some of them went so far as to discuss—on the ship and elsewhere—whether England would stay in the Family or whether, as some eminent statesman was said to have asserted in private talk, she would cut the painter to save expense. One man argued, without any heat, that she would not so much break out of the Empire in one flurry, as politically vend her children one by one to the nearest Power that threatened her comfort, the sale of each case to be preceded by a steady blast of abuse of the chosen victim. He quoted—really these people have viciously long memories!—the five-year campaign of abuse against South Africa as a precedent and a warning.

Our Tobacco Parliament next set itself to consider by what means, if this happened, Canada could keep her identity unsubmerged; and that led to one of the most curious talks I have ever heard. It seemed to be decided that she might—just might—pull through by the skin of her teeth as a nation—if (but this was doubtful) England did not help others to hammer her. Now, twenty years ago one would not have heard any of this sort of thing. If it sounds a little mad, remember that the Mother Country was throughout considered as a lady in violent hysterics.

Just at the end of the talk one of our twelve or thirteen hundred steerage-passengers leaped overboard, ulstered and booted, into a confused and bitter cold sea. Every horror in the world has its fitting ritual. For the fifth time—and four times in just such weather—I heard the screw stop; saw our wake curve like a whip-lash as the great township wrenched herself round; the

lifeboat's crew hurry to the boat-deck; the bare-headed officer race up the shrouds and look for any sign of the poor head that had valued itself so lightly. A boat amid waves can see nothing. There was nothing to see from the first. We waited and quartered the ground back and forth for a long hour, while the rain fell and the seas slapped along our sides, and the steam fluttered drearily through the escapes. Then we went ahead.

The St. Lawrence on the last day of the voyage played up nobly. The maples along its banks had turned—blood red and splendid as the banners of lost youth. Even the oak is not more of a national tree than the maple, and the sight of its welcome made the folks aboard still more happy. A dry wind brought along all the clean smell of their Continent-mixed odours of sawn lumber, virgin earth, and wood-smoke; and they snuffed it, and their eyes softened as they identified point after point along their own beloved river—places where they played and fished and amused themselves in holiday time. It must be pleasant to have a country of one's very own to show off. Understand, they did not in any way boast, shout, squeak, or exclaim, these even-voiced returned men and women. They were simply and unfeignedly glad to see home again, and they said: 'Isn't it lovely? Don't you think it's beautiful? We love it.'

At Quebec there is a sort of place, much infested by locomotives, like a coal-chute whence rise the heights that Wolfe's men scaled on their way to the Plains of Abraham. Perhaps of all the tide-marks in all our lands the affair of Quebec touches the heart and the eye more nearly than any other. Everything meets there; France, the jealous partner of England's glory by land

and sea for eight hundred years; England, bewildered as usual, but for a wonder not openly opposing Pitt, who knew; those other people, destined to break from England as soon as the French peril was removed; Montcalm himself, doomed and resolute; Wolfe, the inevitable trained workman appointed for the finish; and somewhere in the background one James Cook, master of H. M. S. *Mercury*, making beautiful and delicate charts of the St. Lawrence River.

For these reasons the Plains of Abraham are crowned with all sorts of beautiful things—including a jail and a factory. Montcalm's left wing is marked by the jail, and Wolfe's right by the factory. There is, happily, now a movement on foot to abolish these adornments and turn the battle-field and its surroundings into a park, which by nature and association would be one of the most beautiful in our world.

Yet, in spite of jails on the one side and convents on the other and the thin black wreck of the Quebec Railway Bridge, lying like a dumped car-load of tin cans in the river, the Eastern Gate to Canada is noble with a dignity beyond words. We saw it very early, when the under sides of the clouds turned chilly pink over a high-piled, brooding, dusky-purple city. Just at the point of dawn, what looked like the Sultan Harun-al-Raschid's own private shallop, all spangled with coloured lights, stole across the iron-gray water, and disappeared into the darkness of a slip. She came out again in three minutes, but the full day had come, too; so she snapped off her masthead, steering and cabin electrics, and turned into a dingy white ferry-boat, full of cold passengers. I spoke to a Canadian about her. 'Why, she's the old So-and-So, to Port Levis,' he answered,

wondering as the Cockney wonders when a stranger stares at an Inner Circle train. This was *his* Inner Circle—the Zion where he was all at ease. He drew my attention to stately city and stately river with the same tranquil pride that we each feel when the visitor steps across our threshold, whether that be Southampton Water on a gray, wavy morning; Sydney Harbour with a regatta in full swing; or Table Mountain, radiant and new-washed after the Christmas rains. He had, quite rightly, felt personally responsible for the weather, and every flaming stretch of maple since we had entered the river. (The North-wester in these parts is equivalent to the South-easter elsewhere, and may impress a guest unfavourably.)

Then the autumn sun rose, and the man smiled. Personally and politically he said he loathed the city—but it was his.

'Well,' he asked at last, 'what do you think? Not so bad?'

'Oh no. Not at all so bad,' I answered; and it wasn't till much later that I realized that we had exchanged the countersign which runs clear round the Empire.

A PEOPLE AT HOME

AN UP-COUNTRY proverb says: 'She was bidden to the wedding and set down to grind corn.' The same fate, reversed, overtook me on my little excursion. There is a crafty network of organizations of business men called Canadian Clubs. They catch people who look interesting, assemble their members during the mid-day lunch-hour, and, tying the victim to a steak, bid him discourse on anything that he thinks he knows. The idea might be copied elsewhere, since it takes men out of themselves to listen to matters not otherwise coming under their notice and, at the same time, does not hamper their work. It is safely short, too. The whole affair cannot exceed an hour, of which the lunch fills half. The Clubs print their speeches annually, and one gets cross-sections of many interesting questions—from practical forestry to State mints—all set out by experts.

Not being an expert, the experience, to me, was very like hard work. Till then I had thought speech-making was a sort of conversational whist, that any one could cut in it. I perceive now that it is an Art of conventions remote from anything that comes out of an inkpot, and of colours hard to control. The Canadians seem to like listening to speeches, and, though this is by no means a national vice, they make good oratory on occasion. You know the old belief that the white man

on brown, red, or black lands, will throw back in manner and instinct to the type originally bred there? Thus, a speech in the taal should carry the deep roll, the direct belly-appeal, the reiterated, cunning arguments, and the few simple metaphors of the prince of commercial orators, the Bantu. A New Zealander is said to speak from his diaphragm, hands clenched at the sides, as the old Maoris used. What we know of first-class Australian oratory shows us the same alertness, swift flight, and clean delivery as a thrown boomerang. I had half expected in Canadian speeches some survival of the Redskin's elaborate appeal to Suns, Moons, and Mountains—touches of grandiosity and ceremonial invocations. But nothing that I heard was referable to any primitive stock. There was a dignity, a restraint, and, above all, a weight in it, rather curious when one thinks of the influences to which the land lies open. Red it was not; French it was not; but a thing as much by itself as the speakers.

So with the Canadian's few gestures and the bearing of his body. During the (Boer) war one watched the contingents from every point of view, and, most likely, drew wrong inferences. It struck me then that the Canadian, even when tired, slacked off less than the men from the hot countries, and while resting did not lie on his back or his belly, but rather on his side, a leg doubled under him, ready to rise in one surge.

This time while I watched assemblies seated, men in hotels and passers-by, I fancied that he kept this habit of semi-tenseness at home among his own; that it was the complement of the man's still countenance, and the even, lowered voice. Looking at their footmarks on the ground they seem to throw an almost

straight track, neither splayed nor in-toed, and to set their feet down with a gentle forward pressure, rather like the Australian's stealthy footfall. Talking among themselves, or waiting for friends, they did not drum with their fingers, fiddle with their feet, or feel the hair on their face. These things seem trivial enough, but when breeds are in the making everything is worth while. A man told me once—but I never tried the experiment—that each of our Four Races light and handle fire in their own way.

Small wonder we differ! Here is a people with no people at their backs, driving the great world-plough which wins the world's bread up and up over the shoulder of the world—a spectacle, as it might be, out of some tremendous Norse legend. North of them lies Niflheim's enduring cold, with the flick and crackle of the Aurora for Bifrost Bridge that Odin and the Æsirs visited. These people also go north year by year, and drag audacious railways with them. Sometimes they burst into good wheat or timber-land, sometimes into mines of treasure, and all the North is full of voices—as South Africa was once—telling discoveries and making prophecies.

When their winter comes, over the greater part of this country outside the cities, they must sit still, and eat and drink as the Æsir did. In summer they cram twelve months' work into six, because between such-and-such dates certain far rivers will shut, and, later, certain others, till, at last, even the Great Easter Gate at Quebec locks, and men must go in and out by the side-doors at Halifax and St. John. These are conditions that make for extreme boldness, but not for extravagant boastings.

The maples tell when it is time to finish, and all work in hand is regulated by their warning signal. Some jobs can be put through before winter; others must be laid aside ready to jump forward without a lost minute in spring. Thus, from Quebec to Calgary a note of drive—not hustle, but drive and finish-up—hummed like the steam-threshers on the still, autumn air.

Hunters and sportsmen were coming in from the North; prospectors with them, their faces full of mystery, their pockets full of samples, like prospectors the world over. They had already been wearing wolf and coon skin coats. In the great cities which work the year round, carriage-shops exhibited one or two seductive nickel-plated sledges, as a hint; for the sleigh is 'the chariot at hand here of Love.' In the country the farmhouses were stacking up their wood-piles within reach of the kitchen door, and taking down the fly-screens. (One leaves these on, as a rule, till the double windows are brought up from the cellar, and one has to hunt all over the house for missing screws.) Sometimes one saw a few flashing lengths of new stovepipe in a backyard, and pitied the owner. There is no humour in the old, bitter-true stovepipe jests of the comic papers.

But the railways—the wonderful railways—told the winter's tale most emphatically. The thirty-ton coal cars were moving over three thousand miles of track. They grunted and lurched against each other in the switch-yards, or thumped past statelily at midnight on their way to provident housekeepers of the prairie towns. It was not a clear way either; for the bacon, the lard, the apples, the butter, and the cheese, in beautiful white wood barrels, were rolling eastward towards the

steamers before the wheat should descend on them. That is the fifth act of the great Year-Play for which the stage must be cleared. On scores of congested sidings lay huge girders, rolled beams, limbs, and boxes of rivets, once intended for the late Quebec Bridge—now so much mere obstruction—and the victuals had to pick their way through 'em; and behind the victuals was the lumber—clean wood out of the mountains—logs, planks, clapboards, and laths, for which we pay such sinful prices in England—all seeking the sea. There was housing, food, and fuel for millions, on wheels together, and never a grain yet shifted of the real staple which men for five hundred miles were threshing out in heaps as high as fifty-pound villas.

Add to this, that the railways were concerned for their own new developments—double-tracking, loops, cut-offs, taps, and feeder lines, and great swoops out into untouched lands soon to be filled with men. So the construction, ballast, and material trains, the grading machines, the wrecking cars with their camel-like sneering cranes—the whole plant of a new civilization—had to find room somewhere in the general rally before Nature cried, 'Lay off!'

Does any one remember that joyful strong confidence after the war, when it seemed that, at last, South Africa was to be developed—when men laid out railways, and gave orders for engines, and fresh rolling-stock, and labour, and believed gloriously in the future? It is true the hope was murdered afterwards, but—multiply that good hour by a thousand, and you will have some idea of how it feels to be in Canada—a place which even an 'Imperial' Government cannot kill. I had the luck to be shown some things from the inside—

to listen to the details of works projected; the record of works done. Above all, I saw what had actually been achieved in the fifteen years since I had last come that way. One advantage of a new land is that it makes you feel older than Time. I met cities where there had been nothing—literally, absolutely nothing, except, as the fairy tales say, 'the birds crying, and the grass waving in the wind.' Villages and hamlets had grown to great towns, and the great towns themselves had trebled and quadrupled. And the railways rubbed their hands and cried, like the Afrites of old: 'Shall we make a city where no city is; or render flourishing a city that is desolate?' They do it too, while, across the water, gentlemen, never forced to suffer one day's physical discomfort in all their lives, pipe up and say: 'How grossly materialistic!'

I wonder sometimes whether any eminent novelist, philosopher, dramatist, or divine of to-day has to exercise half the pure imagination, not to mention insight, endurance, and self-restraint, which is accepted without comment in what is called 'the material exploitation' of a new country. Take only the question of creating a new city at the junction of two lines—all three in the air. The mere drama of it, the play of the human virtues, would fill a book. And when the work is finished, when the city is, when the new lines embrace a new belt of farms, and the tide of the Wheat has rolled North another unexpected degree, the men who did it break off, without compliments, to repeat the joke elsewhere.

I had some talk with a youngish man whose business it was to train avalanches to jump clear of his section of the track. Thor went to Jotunheim only once or twice,

and he had his useful hammer Miolnr with him. This Thor lived in Jotunheim among the green-ice-crowned peaks of the Selkirks—where if you disturb the giants at certain seasons of the year, by making noises, they will sit upon you and all your fine emotions. So Thor watches them glaring under the May sun, or dull and doubly dangerous beneath the spring rains. He wards off their strokes with enormous brattices of wood, wing-walls of logs bolted together, and such other contraptions as experience teaches. He bears the giants no malice; they do their work, he his. What bothers him a little is that the wind of their blows sometimes rips pines out of the opposite hillsides—explodes, as it were, a whole valley. He thinks, however, he can fix things so as to split large avalanches into little ones.

Another man, to whom I did not talk, sticks in my memory. He had for years and years inspected trains at the head of a heavyish grade in the mountains—though not half so steep as the Hex[1]—where all brakes are jammed home, and the cars slither warily for ten miles. Tire-troubles there would be inconvenient, so he, as the best man, is given the heaviest job—monotony and responsibility combined. He did me the honour of wanting to speak to me, but first he inspected his train—on all fours with a hammer. By the time he was satisfied of the integrity of the underpinnings it was time for us to go; and all that I got was a friendly wave of the hand—a master craftsman's sign, you might call it.

Canada seems full of this class of materialist.

Which reminds me that the other day I saw the Lady

[1]Hex River, South Africa.

herself in the shape of a tall woman of twenty-five or six, waiting for her tram on a street corner. She wore her almost flaxen-gold hair waved, and parted low on the forehead, beneath a black astrachan toque, with red enamel maple-leaf hatpin in one side of it. This was the one touch of colour except the flicker of a buckle on the shoe. The dark, tailor-made dress had no trinkets or attachments, but fitted perfectly. She stood for perhaps a minute without any movement, both hands—right bare, left gloved—hanging naturally at her sides, the very fingers still, the weight of the superb body carried evenly on both feet, and the profile, which was that of Gudrun or Aslauga, thrown out against a dark stone column. What struck me most, next to the grave, tranquil eyes, was her slow, unhurried breathing in the hurry about her. She was evidently a regular fare, for when her tram stopped she smiled at the lucky conductor; and the last I saw of her was a flash of the sun on the red maple-leaf, the full face lighted by that smile, and her hair very pale gold against the dead black fur. But the power of the mouth, the wisdom of the brow, the human comprehension of the eyes, and the out-striking vitality of the creature remained. That is how *I* would have my country drawn, were I a Canadian—and hung in Ottawa Parliament House, for the discouragement of prevaricators.

CITIES AND SPACES

WHAT would you do with a magic carpet if one were lent you? I ask because for a month we had a private car of our very own—a trifling affair less than seventy foot long and thirty ton weight. 'You may find her useful,' said the donor casually, 'to knock about the country. Hitch on to any train you choose and stop off where you choose.'

So she bore us over the C.P.R. from the Atlantic to the Pacific and back, and when we had no more need of her, vanished like the mango tree after the trick.

A private car, though many books have been written in it, is hardly the best place from which to study a country, unless it happen that you have kept house and seen the seasons round under normal conditions on the same continent. Then you know how the cars look from the houses; which is not in the least as the houses look from the cars. Then, the very porter's brush in its nickel clip, the long cathedral-like aisle between the well-known green seats, the toll of the bell and the deep organ-like note of the engine wake up memories; and every sight, smell, and sound outside are like old friends remembering old days together. A piano-top buggy on a muddy, board-sidewalked street, all cut up by the narrow tires; the shingling at the corner of a verandah on a new-built house; a broken snake-fence girdling an old pasture of mulleins and skull-headed boulders; a

wisp of Virginia creeper dying splendidly on the edge of a patch of corn; half-a-dozen panels of snow-fence above a cutting, or even a shameless patent-medicine advertisement, yellow on the black of a tobacco-barn, can make the heart thump and the eyes fill if the beholder have only touched the life of which they are part. What must they mean to the native-born? There was a prairie-bred girl on the train, coming back after a year on the Continent, for whom the pine-belted hills with real mountains behind, the solemn loops of the river, and the intimate friendly farm had nothing to tell.

'You can do these landscapes better in Italy,' she explained, and, with the indescribable gesture of plain folk stifled in broken ground, 'I want to push these hills away and get into the open again! I'm Winnipeg.'

She would have understood the Hanover Road schoolmistress, back from a visit to Cape Town, whom I once saw drive off into thirty miles of mirage almost shouting, 'Thank God, here's something like home at last.'

Other people ricochetted from side to side of the car, reviving this, rediscovering that, anticipating t'other thing, which, sure enough, slid round the next curve to meet them, caring nothing if all the world knew they were home again; and the newly arrived Englishman with his large wooden packing-cases marked 'Settlers, Effects' had no more part in the show than a new boy his first day at school. But two years in Canada and one run home will make him free of the Brotherhood in Canada as it does anywhere else. He may grumble at certain aspects of the life, lament certain richness only to be found in England, but as surely as he grumbles so surely he returns to the big skies, and the big

chances. The failures are those who complain that the land 'does not know a gentleman when it sees him.' They are quite right. The land suspends all judgment on all men till it has seen them work. Thereafter as may be, but work they must because there is a very great deal to be done.

Unluckily the railroads which made the country are bringing in persons who are particular as to the nature and amenities of their work, and if so be they do not find precisely what they are looking for, they complain in print which makes all men seem equal.

The special joy of our trip lay in having travelled the line when it was new and, like the Canada of those days, not much believed in, when all the high and important officials, whose little fingers unhooked cars, were also small and disregarded. To-day, things, men, and cities were different, and the story of the line mixed itself up with the story of the country, the while the car-wheels clicked out, 'John Kino—John Kino! Nagasaki, Yokohama, Hakodate, Heh!' for we were following in the wake of the Imperial Limited, all full of Hongkong and Treaty Ports men. There were old, known, and wonderfully grown cities to be looked at before we could get away to the new work out West, and, 'What d'you think of this building and that suburb?' they said, imperiously. 'Come out and see what has been done in this generation.'

The impact of a Continent is rather overwhelming till you remind yourself that it is no more than your own joy and love and pride in your own patch of garden written a little large over a few more acres. Again, as always, it was the dignity of the cities that impressed—an austere Northern dignity of outline, grouping, and

perspective, aloof from the rush of traffic in the streets. Montreal, of the black-frocked priests and the French notices, had it; and Ottawa, of the gray stone palaces and the St. Petersburg-like shining water-frontages; and Toronto, consumingly commercial, carried the same power in the same repose. Men are always building better than they know, and perhaps this steadfast architecture is waiting for the race when their first flurry of newly realized expansion shall have spent itself, and the present hurrah's-nest of telephone-poles in the streets, shall have been abolished. There are strong objections to any non-fusible, bi-lingual community within a nation, but however much the French are made to hang back in the work of development, their withdrawn and unconcerned cathedrals, schools, and convents, and one aspect of the spirit that breathes from them, make for good. Says young Canada: 'There are millions of dollars' worth of church property in the cities which aren't allowed to be taxed.' On the other hand, the Catholic schools and universities, though they are reported to keep up the old medieval mistrust of Greek, teach the classics as lovingly, tenderly, and intimately as the old Church has always taught them. After all, it must be worth something to say your prayers in a dialect of the tongue that Virgil handled; and a certain touch of insolence, more magnificent and more ancient than the insolence of present materialism, makes a good blend in a new land.

I had the good fortune to see the cities through the eyes of an Englishman out for the first time. 'Have you been to the Bank?' he cried. 'I've never seen anything like it!' 'What's the matter with the Bank?' I asked: for the financial situation across the

Border was at that moment more than usual picturesque. 'It's wonderful!' said he; 'marble pillars—acres of mosaic—steel grilles—might be a cathedral. No one ever told me.' 'I shouldn't worry over a Bank that pays its depositors,' I replied soothingly. 'There are several like it in Ottawa and Toronto.' Next he ran across some pictures in some palaces, and was downright angry because no one had told him that there were five priceless private galleries in one city. 'Look here!' he explained. 'I've been seeing Corots, and Greuzes and Gainsboroughs, and a Holbein, and—and hundreds of really splendid pictures!' 'Why shouldn't you?' I said. 'They've given up painting their lodges with vermilion hereabouts.' 'Yes, but what I mean is, have you—seen the equipment of their schools and colleges, desks, libraries, and lavatories? It's miles ahead of anything we have and—no one ever told me.' 'What was the good of telling? You wouldn't have believed. There's a building in one of the cities, on the lines of the Sheldonian, but better, and if you go as far as Winnipeg, you'll see the finest hotel in all the world.'

'Nonsense!' he said. 'You're pulling my leg! Winnipeg's a prairie-town.'

I left him still lamenting—about a Club and a Gymnasium this time—that no one had ever told him about; and still doubting all that he had heard of Wonders to come.

If we could only manacle four hundred Members of Parliament, like the Chinese in the election cartoons, and walk them round the Empire, what an all-comprehending little Empire we should be when the survivors got home!

Certainly the cities have good right to be proud, and I waited for them to boast; but they were so busy explaining they were only at the beginning of things that, for the honour of the Family, I had to do the boasting. In this praiseworthy game I credited Melbourne (rightly, I hope, but the pace was too good to inquire) with acres of municipal buildings and leagues of art galleries; enlarged the borders of Sydney harbour to meet a statement about Toronto's wharfage; and recommended folk to see Cape Town Cathedral when it should be finished. But Truth will out even on a visit. Our Eldest Sister has more of beauty and strength inside her three cities alone than the rest of Us put together. Yet it would do her no harm to send a commission through the ten great cities of the Empire to see what is being done there in the way of street cleaning, water-supply, and traffic-regulation.

Here and there the people are infected with the unworthy superstition of 'hustle,' which means half-doing your appointed job and applauding your own slapdasherie for as long a time as would enable you to finish off two clean pieces of work. Little congestions of traffic, that an English rural policeman, in a country town, disentangles automatically, are allowed to develop into ten-minute blocks, where waggons and men bang, and back, and blaspheme, for no purpose except to waste time.

The assembly and dispersal of crowds, purchase of tickets, and a good deal of the small machinery of life is clogged and hampered by this unstable, southern spirit which is own brother to Panic. 'Hustle' does not sit well on the national character any more than falsetto or fidgeting becomes grown men. 'Drive,' a laudable

and necessary quality, is quite different, and one meets it up the Western Road where the new country is being made.

We got clean away from the Three Cities and the close-tilled farming and orchard districts, into the Land of Little Lakes—a country of rushing streams, clear-eyed ponds, and boulders among berrybushes; all crying 'Trout' and 'Bear.'

Not so very long ago only a few wise people kept holiday in that part of the world, and they did not give away their discoveries. Now it has become a summer playground where people hunt and camp at large. The names of its further rivers are known in England, and men, otherwise sane, slip away from London into the birches, and come out again bearded and smoke-stained, when the ice is thick enough to cut a canoe. Sometimes they go to look for game; sometimes for minerals—perhaps, even, oil. No one can prophesy. 'We are only at the beginning of things.'

Said an Afrite of the Railway as we passed in our magic carpet: 'You've no notion of the size of our tourist-traffic. It has all grown up since the early 'nineties. The trolley car teaches people in the towns to go for little picnics. When they get more money they go for long ones. All this continent will want playgrounds soon. We're getting them ready.'

The girl from Winnipeg saw the morning frost lie white on the long grass at the lake edges, and watched the haze of mellow golden birch leaves as they dropped. 'Now that's the way trees ought to turn,' she said. 'Don't you think our Eastern maple is a little violent in colour?' Then we passed through a country where for many hours the talk in the cars was of mines and the

treatment of ores. Men told one tales—prospectors' yarns of the sort one used to hear vaguely before Klondike or Nome were public property. They did not care whether one believed or doubted. They, too, were only at the beginning of things—silver perhaps, gold perhaps, nickel perhaps. If a great city did not arise at such a place—the very name was new since my day—it would assuredly be born within a few miles of it. The silent men boarded the cars, and dropped off, and disappeared beyond thickets and hills precisely as the first widely spaced line of skirmishers fans out and vanishes along the front of the day's battle.

One old man sat before me like avenging Time itself, and talked of prophecies of evil that had been falsified. '*They* said there wasn't nothing here excep' rocks an' snow. *They* said there never *wouldn't* be nothing here excep' the railroad. There's them that can't see *yit*,' and he gimleted me with a fierce eye. 'An' all the while, fortunes is made—piles is made—right under our noses.'

'Have you made your pile?' I asked.

He smiled as the artist smiles—all true prospectors have that lofty smile—'Me? No. I've been a prospector most o' my time, but I haven't lost anything. I've had my fun out of the game. By God, I've had my fun out of it!'

I told him how I had once come through when land and timber grants could have been picked up for half less than nothing.

'Yes,' he said placidly. 'I reckon if you'd had any kind of an education you could ha' made a quarter of a million dollars easy in those days. And it's to be made now if you could see where. How? Can you tell me

what the capital of the Hudson Bay district's goin' to be? You can't. Nor I. Nor yet where the six next new cities is going to arise. I get off here, but if I have my health I'll be out next summer again—prospectin' North.'

Imagine a country where men prospect till they are seventy, with no fear of fever, fly, horse-sickness, or trouble from the natives—a country where food and water always taste good! He told me curious things about some fabled gold—the Eternal Mother-lode—out in the North, which is to humble the pride of Nome. And yet, so vast is the Empire, he had never heard the name of Johannesburg!

As the train swung round the shores of Lake Superior the talk swung over to Wheat. Oh yes, men said, there were mines in the country—they were only at the beginning of mines—but that part of the world existed to clean and grade and handle and deliver the Wheat by rail and steamer. The track was being duplicated by a few hundred miles to keep abreast of the floods of it. By and by it might be a four-track road. They were only at the beginning. Meantime here was the Wheat sprouting, tender green, a foot high, among a hundred sidings where it had spilled from the cars; there were the high-shouldered, tea-caddy grain-elevators to clean, and the hospitals to doctor the Wheat; here was new, gaily painted machinery going forward to reap and bind and thresh the Wheat, and all those car-loads of workmen had been slapping down more sidings against the year's delivery of the Wheat.

Two towns stand on the shores of the lake less than a mile apart. What Lloyds is to shipping, or the College of Surgeons to medicine, that they are to the Wheat.

Its honour and integrity are in their hands; and they hate each other with the pure, poisonous, passionate hatred which makes towns grow. If Providence wiped out one of them, the survivor would pine away and die—a mateless hate-bird. Some day they must unite, and the question of the composite name they shall then carry already vexes them. A man there told me that Lake Superior was 'a useful piece of water,' in that it lay so handy to the C.P.R. tracks. There is a quiet horror about the Great Lakes which grows as one revisits them. Fresh water has no right or call to dip over the horizon, pulling down and pushing up the hulls of big steamers; no right to tread the slow, deep-sea dance-step between wrinkled cliffs; nor to roar in on weed and sand beaches between vast headlands that run out for leagues into haze and sea fog. Lake Superior is all the same stuff as what towns pay taxes for, but it engulfs and wrecks and drives ashore, like a fully accredited ocean—a hideous thing to find in the heart of a continent. Some people go sailing on it for pleasure, and it has produced a breed of sailors who bear the same relation to the salt-water variety as a snake-charmer does to a lion-tamer.

Yet it is undoubtedly a useful piece of water.

NEWSPAPERS AND DEMOCRACY

LET it be granted that, as the loud-voiced herald hired by the Eolithic tribe to cry the news of the coming day along the caves, preceded the chosen Tribal Bard who sang the more picturesque history of the tribe, so is Journalism senior to Literature, in that Journalism meets the first tribal need after warmth, food, and women.

In new countries it shows clear trace of its descent from the Tribal Herald. A tribe thinly occupying large spaces feels lonely. It desires to hear the roll-call of its members cried often and loudly; to comfort itself with the knowledge that there are companions just below the horizon. It employs, therefore, heralds to name and describe all who pass. That is why newspapers of new countries seem often so outrageously personal. The tribe, moreover, needs quick and sure knowledge of everything that touches on its daily life in the big spaces—earth, air, and water news which the Older Peoples have put behind them. That is why its newspapers so often seem so laboriously trivial.

For example, a red-nosed member of the tribe, Pete O'Halloran, comes in thirty miles to have his horse shod, and incidentally smashes the king-bolt of his buckboard at a bad place in the road. The Tribal Herald—a thin weekly, with a patent inside—connects the red nose and the breakdown with an innuendo which, to the out-

sider, is clumsy libel. But the Tribal Herald understands that two-and-seventy families of the tribe may use that road weekly. It concerns them to discover whether the accident was due to Pete being drunk or, as Pete protests, to the neglected state of the road. Fifteen men happen to know that Pete's nose is an affliction, not an indication. One of them loafs across and explains to the Tribal Herald, who next week cries aloud that the road ought to be mended. Meantime Pete, warm to the marrow at having focussed the attention of his tribe for a few moments, retires thirty miles up-stage, pursued by advertisements of buck-boards guaranteed not to break their king-bolts, and later (which is what the tribe were after all the time) some tribal authority or other mends the roads.

This is only a big-scale diagram, but with a little attention you can see the tribal instinct of self-preservation quite logically underrunning all sorts of queer modern developments.

As the tribe grows, and men do not behold the horizon from edge to unbroken edge, their desire to know all about the next man weakens a little—but not much. Outside the cities are still the long distances, the 'vast, unoccupied areas' of the advertisements; and the men who come and go yearn to keep touch with and report themselves as of old to their lodges. A man stepping out of the dark into the circle of the fires naturally, if he be a true man, holds up his hands and says, 'I, So-and-So, am here.' You can watch the ritual in full swing at any hotel when the reporter (*pro* Tribal Herald) runs his eyes down the list of arrivals, and before he can turn from the register is met by the newcomer, who, without special desire for notoriety, explains his business and

intentions. Observe, it is always at evening that the reporter concerns himself with strangers. By day he follows the activities of his own city and the doings of near-by chiefs; but when it is time to close the stockade, to lager the waggons, to draw the thorn-bush back into the gap, then in all lands he reverts to the Tribal Herald, who is also the tribal Outer Guard.

There are countries where a man is indecently pawed over by chattering heralds who bob their foul torches in his face till he is singed and smoked at once. In Canada the necessary 'Stand and deliver your sentiments' goes through with the large decency that stamps all the Dominion. A stranger's words are passed on to the tribe quite accurately; no dirt is put into his mouth, and where the heralds judge that it would be better not to translate certain remarks they courteously explain why.

It was always delightful to meet the reporters, for they were men interested in their land, with the keen, unselfish interest that one finds in young house-surgeons or civilians. Thanks to the (Boer) war, many of them had reached out to the ends of our earth, and spoke of the sister nations as it did one good to hear. Consequently the interviews—which are as dreary for the reporter as the reported—often turned into pleasant and unpublished talks. One felt at every turn of the quick sentences to be dealing with made and trained players of the game—balanced men who believed in decencies not to be disregarded, confidences not to be violated, and honour not to be mocked. (This may explain what men and women have told me—that there is very little of the brutal domestic terrorism of the Press in Canada, and not much blackmailing.) They neither

spat nor wriggled; they interpolated no juicy anecdotes of murder or theft among their acquaintance; and not once between either ocean did they or any other fellow-subjects volunteer that their country was 'law-abiding.'

You know the First Sign-post on the Great Main Road? 'When a Woman advertises that she is virtuous, a Man that he is a gentleman, a Community that it is loyal, or a Country that it is law-abiding—go the other way!'

Yet, while the men's talk was so good and new, their written word seemed to be cast in conventional, not to say old-fashioned, moulds. A quarter of a century ago a sub-editor, opening his mail, could identify the Melbourne *Argus*, the Sydney *Morning Herald*, or the Cape *Times* as far as he could see them. Even unheaded clippings from them declared their origin as a piece of hide betrays the beast that wore it. But he noticed then that Canadian journals left neither spoor nor scent—might have blown in from anywhere between thirty degrees of latitude—and had to be carefully identified by hand. To-day the spacing, the headlines, the advertising of Canadian papers, the chessboard-like look of the open page which should be a daily beautiful study in black and white, the brittle pulp-paper, the machine-set type, are all as standardized as the railway cars of the Continent. Indeed, looking through a mass of Canadian journals is like trying to find one's own sleeper in a corridor train. Newspaper offices are among the most conservative organizations in the world; but surely after twenty-five years some changes might be permitted to creep in; some original convention of expression or assembly might be developed.

I drew up to this idea cautiously among a knot of

fellow-craftsmen. 'You mean,' said one straight-eyed youth, 'that we are a back-number copying back-numbers?'

It was precisely what I did mean, so I made haste to deny it. 'We know that,' he said cheerfully. 'Remember we haven't the sea all round us—and the postal rates to England have only just been lowered. It will all come right.'

Surely it will; but meantime one hates to think of these splendid people using second-class words to express first-class emotions.

And so naturally from Journalism to Democracy. Every country is entitled to her reservations, and pretences, but the more 'democratic' a land is the more make-believes must the stranger respect. Some of the Tribal Heralds were very good to me in this matter, and, as it were, nudged me when it was time to duck in the House of Rimmon. During their office hours they professed an unflinching belief in the blessed word 'Democracy,' which means any crowd on the move—that is to say, the helpless thing which breaks through floors and falls into cellars; overturns pleasure-boats by rushing from port to starboard; stamps men into pulp because it thinks it has lost sixpence, and jams and grills in the doorways of blazing theatres. Out of office, like everyone else, they relaxed. Many winked, a few were flippant, but they all agreed that the only drawback to Democracy was Demos—a jealous God of primitive tastes and despotic tendencies. I received a faithful portrait of him from a politician who had worshipped him all his life. It was practically the Epistle of Jeremy—the sixth chapter of Baruch—done into unquotable English.

But Canada is not yet an ideal Democracy. For one thing she has had to work hard among rough-edged surroundings which carry inevitable consequences. For another, the law in Canada exists and is administered, not as a surprise, a joke, a favour, a bribe, or a Wrestling Turk exhibition, but as an integral part of the national character—no more to be forgotten or talked about than one's trousers. If you kill, you hang. If you steal, you go to jail. This has worked towards peace, self-respect, and, I think, the innate dignity of the people. On the other hand—which is where the trouble will begin—railways and steamers make it possible nowadays to bring in persons who need never lose touch of hot and cold water-taps, spread tables, and crockery till they are turned out, much surprised, into the wilderness. They clean miss the long weeks of salt-water and the slow passage across the plains which pickled and tanned the early emigrants. They arrive with soft bodies and unaired souls. I had this vividly brought home to me by a man on a train among the Selkirks. He stood on the safely railed rear-platform, looked at the gigantic pine-furred shoulder round which men at their lives' risk had led every yard of the track, and chirruped: 'I say, why can't all this be nationalized?' There was nothing under heaven except the snows and the steep to prevent him from dropping off the cars and hunting a mine for himself. Instead of which he went into the dining-car. That is one type.

A man told me the old tale of a crowd of Russian immigrants who at a big fire in a city 'verted to the ancestral type, and blocked the streets yelling, 'Down with the Czar!' That is another type. A few days later I was shown a wire stating that a community of

Doukhobors—Russians again—had, not for the first time, undressed themselves, and were fleeing up the track to meet the Messiah before the snow fell. Police were pursuing them with warm underclothing, and trains would please take care not to run over them.

So there you have three sort of steam-borne unfitness—soft, savage, and mad. There is a fourth brand, which may be either home-grown or imported, but democracies do not recognize it, of downright bad folk—grown, healthy men and women who honestly rejoice in doing evil. These four classes acting together might conceivably produce a rather pernicious democracy; alien hysteria, blood-craze, and the like reinforcing local ignorance, sloth, and arrogance. For example, I read a letter in a paper sympathizing with these same Doukhobors. The writer knew a community of excellent people in England (you see where the rot starts!) who lived barefoot, paid no taxes, ate nuts, and were above marriage. They were a soulful folk, living pure lives. The Doukhobors were also pure and soulful, entitled in a free country to live their own lives, and not to be oppressed, etc., etc. (Imported soft, observe, playing up to Imported mad.) Meantime, disgusted police were chasing the Doukhobors into flannels that they might live to produce children fit to consort with the sons of the man who wrote that letter and the daughters of the crowd that lost their heads at the fire.

'All of which,' men and women answered, 'we admit. But what can we do? We want people.' And they showed vast and well-equipped schools, where the children of Slav immigrants are taught English and the songs of Canada. 'When they grow up,' people said,

'you can't tell them from Canadians.' It was a wonderful work. The teacher holds up pens, reels, and so forth, giving the name in English; the children repeating Chinese fashion. Presently when they have enough words they can bridge back to the knowledge they learned in their own country, so that a boy of twelve, at, say, the end of a year, will produce a well-written English account of his journey from Russia, how much his mother paid for food by the way, and where his father got his first job. He will also lay his hand on his heart, and say: 'I—am—a—Canadian.' This gratifies the Canadian, who naturally purrs over an emigrant owing everything to the land which adopted him and set him on his feet. The Lady Bountiful of an English village takes the same interest in a child she has helped on in the world. And the child repays by his gratitude and good behaviour.

Personally, one cannot care much for those who have renounced their own country. They may have had good reason, but they have broken the rules of the game, and ought to be penalized instead of adding to their score. Nor is it true, as men pretend, that a few full meals and fine clothes obliterate all taint of alien instinct and reversion. A thousand years cannot be as yesterday for mankind; and one has only to glance at the races across the Border to realise how in outlook, manner, expression, and morale the South and South-east profoundly and fatally affects the North and North-west. That was why the sight of the beady-eyed, muddy-skinned, aproned women, with handkerchiefs on their heads and Oriental bundles in their hands, always distressed one.

'But *why* must you get this stuff?" I asked. 'You

know it is not your equal, and it knows that it is not your equal; and that is bad for you both. What is the matter with the English as immigrants?'

The answers were explicit: 'Because the English do no work. Because we are sick of Remittance-men and loafers sent out here. Because the English are rotten with Socialism. Because the English don't fit with our life. They kick at our way of doing things. They are always telling us how things are done in England. They carry frills! Don't you know the story of the Englishman who lost his way and was found half-dead of thirst beside a river? When he was asked why he didn't drink, he said: 'How the deuce can I without a glars?'

'But,' I argued over three thousand miles of country, 'all these are excellent reasons for bringing in the Englishman. It is true that in his own country he is taught to shirk work, because kind, silly people fall over each other to help and debauch and amuse him. Here, General January will stiffen him up. Remittance-men are an affliction to every branch of the Family, but your manners and morals can't be so tender as to suffer from a few thousand of them among your six millions. As to the Englishman's Socialism, he is, by nature, the most unsocial animal alive. What you call Socialism is his intellectual equivalent for Diabolo and Limerick competitions. As to his criticisms, you surely wouldn't marry a woman who agreed with you in everything, and you ought to choose your immigrants on the same lines. You admit that the Canadian is too busy to kick at anything. The Englishman is a born kicker. ("Yes, he is all that," they said.) He kicks on principle, and that is what makes for civilization. So did your

Englishman's instinct about the glass. Every new country needs—vitally needs—one-half of one per cent of its population trained to die of thirst rather than drink out of their hands. You are always talking of the second generation of your Smyrniotes and Bessarabians. Think what the second generation of the English are!"

They thought—quite visibly—but they did not much seem to relish it. There was a queer stringhalt in their talk—a conversational shy across the road—when one touched on these subjects. After a while I went to a Tribal Herald whom I could trust, and demanded of him point-blank where the trouble really lay, and who was behind it.

'It is Labour,' he said. 'You had better leave it alone.'

LABOUR

ONE cannot leave a thing alone if it is thrust under the nose at every turn. I had not quitted the Quebec steamer three minutes when I was questioned point-blank: 'What do you think of the question of Asiatic Exclusion which is Agitating our Community?'

The Second Sign-Post on the Great Main Road says: 'If a Community is agitated by a Question—inquire politely after the health of the Agitator.' This I did, without success; and had to temporize all across the Continent till I could find some one to help me to acceptable answers. The Question appears to be confined to British Columbia. There, after a while, the men who had their own reasons for not wishing to talk referred me to others who explained, and on the acutest understanding that no names were to be published (it is sweet to see engineers afraid of being hoist by their own petards) one got more or less at something like facts.

The Chinaman has always been in the habit of coming to British Columbia, where he makes, as he does elsewhere, the finest servant in the world. No one, I was assured on all hands, objects to the biddable Chinaman. He takes work which no white man in a new country will handle, and when kicked by the mean white will not grossly retaliate. He has always paid

for the privilege of making his fortune on this wonderful coast, but with singular forethought and statesmanship, the popular Will, some few years ago, decided to double the head-tax on his entry. Strange as it may appear, the Chinaman now charges double for his services, and is scarce at that. This is said to be one of the reasons why overworked white women die or go off their heads; and why in new cities you can see blocks of flats being built to minimize the inconveniences of housekeeping without help. The birth-rate will fall later in exact proportion to those flats.

Since the Russo-Japanese War the Japanese have taken to coming over to British Columbia. They also do work which no white man will; such as hauling wet logs for lumber mills out of cold water at from eight to ten shillings a day. They supply the service in hotels and dining-rooms and keep small shops. The trouble with them is that they are just a little too good, and when attacked defend themselves with asperity.

A fair sprinkling of Punjabis—ex-soldiers, Sikhs, Muzbis, and Jats—are coming in on the boats. The plague at home seems to have made them restless, but I could not gather why so many of them come from Shahpur, Phillour, and Jullundur way. These men do not, of course, offer for house-service, but work in the lumber mills, and with the least little care and attention could be made most valuable. Some one ought to tell them not to bring their old men with them, and better arrangements should be made for their remitting money home to their villages. They are not understood, of course; but they are not hated.

The objection is all against the Japanese. So far—except that they are said to have captured the local

fishing trade at Vancouver, precisely as the Malays control the Cape Town fish business—they have not yet competed with the whites; but I was earnestly assured by many men that there was danger of their lowering the standard of life and wages. The demand, therefore, in certain quarters is that they go—absolutely and unconditionally. (You may have noticed that Democracies are strong on the imperative mood.) An attempt was made to shift them shortly before I came to Vancouver, but it was not very successful, because the Japanese barricaded their quarters and flocked out, a broken bottle held by the neck in either hand, which they jabbed in the faces of the demonstrators. It is, perhaps, easier to haze and hammer bewildered Hindus and Tamils, as is being done across the Border, than to stampede the men of the Yalu and Liaoyang.[1]

But when one began to ask questions one got lost in a maze of hints, reservations, and orations, mostly delivered with constraint, as though the talkers were saying a piece learned by heart. Here are some samples:—

A man penned me in a corner with a single heavily capitalized sentence. 'There is a General Sentiment among Our People that the Japanese Must Go,' said he.

'Very good,' said I. 'How d'you propose to set about it?'

'That is nothing to us. There is a General Sentiment,' etc.

'Quite so. Sentiment is a beautiful thing, but what are you going to do?' He did not condescend to particulars, but kept repeating the sentiment, which, as I promised, I record.

[1]Battles in the Russo-Japanese War.

Another man was a little more explicit. 'We desire,' he said, 'to keep the Chinaman. But the Japanese must go.'

'Then who takes their place? Isn't this rather a new country to pitch people out of?'

'We must develop our Resources slowly, sir—with an Eye to the Interests of our Children. We must preserve the Continent for Races which will assimilate with Ours. We must not be swamped by Aliens.'

'Then bring in your own races and bring 'em in quick,' I ventured.

This is the one remark one must not make in certain quarters of the West; and I lost caste heavily while he explained (exactly as the Dutch did at the Cape years ago) how British Columbia was by no means so rich as she appeared; that she was throttled by capitalists and monopolists of all kinds; that white labour had to be laid off and fed and warmed during the winter; that living expenses were enormously high; that they were at the end of a period of prosperity, and were now entering on lean years; and that whatever steps were necessary for bringing in more white people should be taken with extreme caution. Then he added that the railway rates to British Columbia were so high that emigrants were debarred from coming on there.

'But haven't the rates been reduced?' I asked.

'Yes—yes, I believe they have, but immigrants are so much in demand that they are snapped up before they have got so far West. You must remember, too, that skilled labour is not like agricultural labour. It is dependent on so many considerations. And the Japanese must go.'

'So people have told me. But I heard stories of

dairies and fruit-farms in British Columbia being thrown up because there was no labour to milk or pick the fruit. Is that true, d'you think?'

'Well, you can't expect a man with all the chances that our country offers him to milk cows in a pasture. A Chinaman can do that. We want races that will assimilate with ours,' etc., etc.

'But didn't the Salvation Army offer to bring in three or four thousand English some short time ago? What came of that idea?'

'It—er—fell through.'

'Why?'

'For political reasons, I believe. We do not want People who will lower the Standard of Living. That is why the Japanese must go.'

'Then why keep the Chinese?'

'We can get on with the Chinese. We can't get on without the Chinese. But we must have Emigration of a Type that will assimilate with Our People. I hope I have made myself clear?'

I hoped that he had, too.

Now hear a wife, a mother, and a housekeeper. 'We have to pay for this precious state of things with our health and our children's. Do you know the saying that the Frontier is hard on women and cattle? This isn't the frontier, but in some respects it's worse, because we have all the luxuries and appearances—the pretty glass and silver to put on the table. We have to dust, polish, and arrange 'em after we've done our housework. I don't suppose that means anything to you, but—try it for a month! We have no help. A Chinaman costs fifty or sixty dollars a month now. Our husbands can't always afford that. How old would

you take me for? I'm not thirty. Well, thank God, I stopped my sister coming out West. Oh yes, it's a fine country—for men.'

'Can't you import servants from England?'

'I can't pay a girl's passage in order to have her married in three months. Besides, she wouldn't work. They won't when they see Chinamen working.'

'Do you object to the Japanese, too?'

'Of course not. No one does. It's only politics. The wives of the men who earn six and seven dollars a day—skilled labour they call it—have Chinese and Jap servants. *We* can't afford it. *We* have to think of saving for the future, but those other people live up to every cent they earn. They know *they're* all right. They're Labour. They'll be looked after, whatever happens. You can see how the State looks after me.'

A little later I had occasion to go through a great and beautiful city between six and seven of a crisp morning. Milk and fish, vegetables, etc., were being delivered to the silent houses by Chinese and Japanese. Not a single man was visible on that chilly job.

Later still a man came to see me, without too publicly giving his name. He was in a small way of business, and told me (others had said much the same thing) that if I gave him away his business would suffer. He talked for half an hour on end.

'Am I to understand, then,' I said, 'that what you call Labour absolutely dominates this part of the world?'

He nodded.

'That it is difficult to get skilled labour into here?'

'Difficult? My God, if I want to get an extra hand

for my business—I pay Union wages, of course—I have to arrange to get him here secretly. I have to go out and meet him, accidental-like, down the line, and if the Unions find out that he is coming, they, like as not, order him back East, or turn him down across the Border.'

'Even if he has his Union ticket? Why?'

'They'll tell him that labour conditions are not good here. He knows what that means. He'll turn back quick enough. I'm in a small way of business, and I can't afford to take any chances fighting the Unions.'

'What would happen if you did?'

'D'you know what's happening across the Border? Men get blown up there—with dynamite.'

'But this isn't across the Border?'

'It's a damn-sight too near to be pleasant. And witnesses get blown up, too. You see, the Labour situation ain't run from our side the line. It's worked from down under. You may have noticed men were rather careful when they talked about it?'

'Yes, I noticed all that.'

'Well, it ain't a pleasant state of affairs. I don't say that the Unions here would do anything *to* you—and please understand I'm all for the rights of Labour myself. Labour has no better friend than me—I've been a working man, though I've got a business of my own now. Don't run away with any idea that I'm against Labour—will you?'

'Not in the least. I can see that. You merely find that Labour's a little bit—er—inconsiderate, sometimes.'

'Look what happens across the Border! I suppose they've told you that little fuss with the Japanese in Vancouver was worked from down under, haven't they?

I don't think our own people 'ud have done it by themselves.'

"I've heard that several times. Is it quite sporting, do you think, to lay the blame on another country?'

'*You* don't live here. But as I was saying—if we get rid of the Japs to-day, we'll be told to get rid of some one else to-morrow. There's no limit, sir, to what Labour wants. None!'

'I thought they only want a fair day's wage for a fair day's work?'

'That may do in the Old Country, but here they mean to boss the country. They do.'

'And how does the country like it?'

'We're about sick of it. It don't matter much in flush times—employers'll do most anything sooner than stop work—but when we come to a pinch, you'll hear something. We're a rich land—in spite of everything they make out—but we're held up at every turn by Labour. Why, there's businesses on businesses which friends of mine—in a small way like myself—want to start. Businesses in every direction—if they was only allowed to start in. But they ain't.'

'That's a pity. Now, what do you think about the Japanese question?'

'I don't think. I know. Both political parties are playing up to the Labour vote—if you understand what that means.'

I tried to understand.

'And neither side 'll tell the truth—that if the Asiatic goes, this side of the Continent 'll drop out of sight, unless we get free white immigration. And any party that proposed white immigration on a large scale 'ud be snowed under next election. I'm telling you

what politicians think. Myself, I believe if a man stood up to Labour—not that I've any feeling against Labour—and just talked sense, a lot of people would follow him—quietly, of course. I believe he could even get white immigration after a while. He'd lose the first election, of course, but in the long run . . . We're about sick of Labour. I wanted you to know the truth.'

'Thank you. And you don't think any attempt to bring in white immigration would succeed?'

'Not if it didn't suit Labour. You can try it if you like, and see what happens.'

On that hint I made an experiment in another city. There were three men of position, and importance, and affluence, each keenly interested in the development of their land, each asserting that what the land needed was white immigrants. And we four talked for two hours on the matter—up and down and in circles. The one point on which those three men were unanimous was, that whatever steps were taken to bring people into British Columbia from England, by private recruiting or otherwise, should be taken secretly. Otherwise the business of the people concerned in the scheme would suffer.

At which point I dropped the Great Question of Asiatic Exclusion which is Agitating all our Community; and I leave it to you, especially in Australia and the Cape, to draw your own conclusions.

Externally, British Columbia appears to be the richest and the loveliest section of the Continent. Over and above her own resources she has a fair chance to secure an immense Asiatic trade, which she urgently desires. Her land, in many places over large areas, is

peculiarly fitted for the small farmer and fruit-grower, who can send his truck to the cities. On every hand I heard a demand for labour of all kinds. At the same time, in no other part of the Continent did I meet so many men who insistently decried the value and possibilities of their country, or who dwelt more fluently on the hardships and privations to be endured by the white immigrant. I believe that one or two gentlemen have gone to England to explain the drawbacks *viva voce*. It is possible that they incur a great responsibility in the present, and even a terrible one for the future.

THE FORTUNATE TOWNS

AFTER Politics, let us return to the Prairie which is the High Veldt, plus Hope, Activity, and Reward. Winnipeg is the door to it—a great city in a great plain, comparing herself, innocently enough, to other cities of her acquaintance, but quite unlike any other city.

When one meets, in her own house, a woman not seen since girlhood she is all a stranger till some remembered tone or gesture links up to the past, and one cries: 'It *is* you after all.' But, indeed, the child has gone; the woman with her influences has taken her place. I tried vainly to recover the gawky, graceless city I had known, so unformed and so insistent on her shy self. I even ventured to remind a man of it. 'I remember,' he said, smiling, 'but we were young then. This thing,' indicating an immense perspective of asphalted avenue that dipped under thirty railway tracks, 'only came up in the last ten years—practically the last five. We've had to enlarge all those warehouses yonder by adding two or three stories to 'em, and we've hardly begun to go ahead yet. We're just beginning.'

Warehouses, railway-sidings, and such are only counters in the White Man's Game, which can be swept up and re-dealt as the play varies. It was the spirit in the thin dancing air—the new spirit of the new city—

which rejoiced me. Winnipeg has Things in abundance, but has learned to put them beneath her feet, not on top of her mind, and so is older than many cities. None the less the Things had to be shown—for what shopping is to the woman showing off his town is to the right-minded man. First came the suburbs—miles on miles of the dainty, clean-outlined, wooden-built houses each unjealously divided from its neighbour by the lightest of boundaries. One could date them by their architecture, year after year, back to the Early 'Nineties, which is when civilization began; could guess within a few score dollars at their cost and the incomes of their owners, and could ask questions about the new domestic appliances of to-day.

'Asphalt streets and concrete sidewalks came up a few years ago,' said our host as we trotted over miles of it. 'We found it the only way to fight the prairie mud. Look!' Where the daring road ended, there lay unsubdued, level with the pale asphalt, the tenacious prairie, over which civilization fought her hub-deep way to the West. And with asphalt and concrete they fight the prairie back every building season. Next came the show-houses, built by rich men with an eye to the honour and glory of their city, which is the first obligation of wealth in a new land.

We twisted and turned among broad, clean, tree-lined, sunlit boulevards and avenues, all sluiced down with an air that forbade any thought of fatigue, and talked of city government and municipal taxation, till, in a certain silence, we were shown a suburb of uncared-for houses, shops, and banks, whose sides and corners were rubbed greasy by the shoulders of loafers. Dirt and tin cans lay about the street. Yet it was not

the squalor of poverty so much as the lack of instinct to keep clean. One race prefers to inhabit there.

Next a glimpse of a cold, white cathedral, red-brick schools almost as big (thank goodness!) as some convents; hospitals, institutions, a mile or so of shops, and then a most familiar-feeling lunch at a club which would have amazed my Englishman at Montreal, where men, not yet old, talked of Fort Garry as they remembered it, and tales of the founding of the city, of early administrative shifts and accidents, mingled with the younger men's prophecies and frivolities.

There are a few places still left where men can handle big things with a light touch, and take more for granted in five minutes than an Englishman at home could puzzle out in a year. But one would not meet many English at a lunch in a London club who took the contract for building London Wall or helped bully King John into signing Magna Charta.

I had two views of the city—one on a gray day from the roof of a monster building, whence it seemed to overflow and fill with noises the whole vast cup of the horizon; and still, all round its edge, jets of steam and the impatient cries of machinery showed it was eating out into the prairie like a smothered fire.

The other picture was a silhouette of the city's flank, mysterious as a line of unexplored cliffs, under a sky crimson-barred from the zenith to the ground, where it lay, pale emerald behind the uneven ramparts. As our train halted in the last of the dusk, and the rails glowed dull red, I caught the deep surge of it, and seven miles across the purple levels saw the low, restless aurora of its lights. It is rather an awesome thing to listen to a vanguard of civilization talking to

itself in the night in the same tone as a thousand-year-old city.

All the country hereabouts is riddled with railways for business and pleasure undreamed of fifteen years ago, and it was a long time before we reached the clear prairie of air and space and open land. The air is different from any air that ever blew; the space is ampler than most spaces, because it runs back to the unhampered Pole, and the open land keeps the secret of its magic as closely as the sea or the desert.

People here do not stumble against each other around corners, but see largely and tranquilly from a long way off what they desire, or wish to avoid, and they shape their path accordingly across the waves, and troughs, and tongues, and dips and fans of the land.

When mere space and the stoop of the high sky begin to overwhelm, earth provides little ponds and lakes, lying in soft-flanked hollows, where people can step down out of the floods of air, and delight themselves with small and known distances. Most of the women I saw about the houses were down in the hollows, and most of the men were on the crests and the flats. Once, while we halted a woman drove straight down at us from the sky-line, along a golden path between black ploughed lands. When the horse, who managed affairs, stopped at the cars, she nodded mysteriously, and showed us a very small baby in the hollow of her arm. Doubtless she was some exiled Queen flying north to found a dynasty and establish a country. The Prairie makes everything wonderful.

They were threshing the wheat on both sides of the track as far as the eye could see. The smoke of the machines went up in orderly perspective, alongside the

mounds of chaff—thus: a machine, a house, a mound of chaff, a stretch of wheat in stooks—and then repeat the pattern over the next few degrees of longitude. We ran through strings of nearly touching little towns, where I remembered an occasional shack; and through big towns once represented by a name-board, a siding, and two troopers of the North-West Police. In those days men proved that Wheat would not grow north of some fool's line, or other, or, if it did, that no one would grow it. And now the Wheat was marching with us as far as the eye could reach; the railways were out, two, three hundred miles north, peopling a new wheat country; and north of that again the Grand Trunk was laying down a suburban extension of a few thousand miles across the Continent, with branches perhaps to Dawson City, certainly to Hudson Bay.

'Come north and look!' cried the Afrites of the Railway. 'You're only on the fringe of it here.' I preferred to keep the old road, and to gape at miracles accomplished since my day. The old, false-fronted, hollow-stomached Western hotels were gone; their places filled by five-story brick or stone ones, with Post Offices to match. Occasionally some overlooked fragment of the past still cleaved to a town, and marked it for an old acquaintance, but often one had to get a mile away and look back on a place—as one holds a palimpsest up against the light—to identify the long overlaid lines of the beginnings. Each town supplied the big farming country behind it, and each town school carried the Union Jack on a flag staff in its playground. So far as one could understand, the scholars are taught neither to hate, nor despise, nor beg from, their own country.

I whispered to a man that I was a little tired of a three-

days' tyranny of Wheat, besides being shocked at farmers who used clean bright straw for fuel, and made bonfires of their chaff-hills. 'You're 'way behind the times,' said he. 'There's fruit and dairying and any quantity of mixed farming going forward all around—let alone irrigation further West. Wheat's not our only king by a long sight. Wait till you strike such and such a place.' It was there I met a prophet and a preacher in the shape of a Commissioner of the Local Board of Trade (all towns have them), who firmly showed me the vegetables which his district produced. They *were* vegetables, too—all neatly staged in a little kiosk near the station.

I think the pious Thomas Tusser would have loved that man. 'Providence,' said he, shedding pamphlets at every gesture, 'did not intend everlasting Wheat in this section. No, sir! Our business is to keep ahead of Providence—to meet her with mixed farming. Are you interested in mixed farming? Psha! Too bad you missed our fruit and vegetable show. It draws people together, mixed farming does. I don't say Wheat is narrowing to the outlook, but I claim there's more sociability and money in mixed farming. We've been hypnotized by Wheat and Cattle. Now—the cars won't start yet awhile—I'll just tell you my ideas.'

For fifteen glorious minutes he gave me condensed essence of mixed farming, with excursions into sugar-beet (did you know they are making sugar in Alberta?), and he talked of farmyard muck, our dark mother of all things, with proper devotion.

'What we want now,' he cried in farewell, ' is men—more men. Yes, and women.'

They need women sorely for domestic help, to meet

the mad rush of work at harvest time—maids who will help in house, dairy, and chicken-run till they are married.

A steady tide sets that way already; one contented settler recruiting others from England; but if a tenth of that energy wasted on 'social reform' could be diverted to decently thought out and supervised emigration work ('Labour' does not yet object to people working on the land) we might do something worth talking about. The races which work and do not form Committees are going into the country at least as fast as ours. It makes one jealous and afraid to watch aliens taking, and taking honestly, so much of this treasure of good fortune and sane living.

There was a town down the road which I had first heard discussed nigh twenty years ago by a broken-down prospector in a box-car. 'Young feller,' said he, after he had made a professional prophecy, 'you'll hear of that town if you live. She's born lucky.'

I saw the town later—it was a siding by a trestle bridge where Indians sold beadwork—and as years passed I gathered that the old tramp's prophecy had come true, and that Luck of some kind had struck the little town by the big river. So, this trip, I stopped to make sure. It was a beautiful town of six thousand people, and a railway junction, beside a high-girdered iron bridge; there was a public garden with trees at the station. A company of joyous men and women, whom that air and that light, and their own goodwill, made our brothers and sisters, came along in motors, and gave us such a day as never was.

'What about the Luck?' I asked.

'Heavens!' said one. 'Haven't you heard about

our natural gas—the greatest natural gas in the world? Oh, come and see!'

I was whirled off to a roundhouse full of engines and machinery-shops, worked by natural gas which comes out of the earth, smelling slightly of fried onions, at a pressure of six hundred pounds, and by valves and taps is reduced to four pounds. There was Luck enough to make a metropolis. Imagine a city's heating and light—to say nothing of power—laid on at no greater expense than that of piping!

'Are there any limits to the possibilities of it?' I demanded.

'Who knows? We're only at the beginning. We'll show you a brick-making plant, out on the prairie, run by gas. But just now we want to show you one of our pet farms.'

Away swooped the motors, like swallows, over roads any width you please, and up on to what looked like the High Veldt itself. A Major of the Mounted Police, who had done a year at the Boer War, told us how the ostrich-farm fencing and the little meercats sitting up and racing about South Africa had made him homesick for the sight of the gophers by the wayside, and the endless panels of wire fencing along which we rushed. (The Prairie has nothing to learn from the Veldt about fencing, or tricky gates.)

'After all,' said the Major, 'there's no country to touch this. I've had thirty years of it—from one end to the other.'

Then they pointed out all the quarters of the horizon—say, fifty miles wherever you turned—and gave them names.

The show farmer had taken his folk to church, but we

friendly slipped through his gates and reached the silent, spick-and-span house, with its trim barn, and a vast mound of copper-coloured wheat, piled in the sun between two mounds of golden chaff. Every one thumbed a sample of it and passed judgment—it must have been worth a few hundred golden sovereigns as it lay, out on the veldt—and we sat around, on the farm machinery and, in the hush that a shut-up house always imposes, we seemed to hear the lavish earth getting ready for new harvests. There was no true wind, but a push, as it were, of the whole crystal atmosphere.

'Now for the brickfield!' they cried. It was many miles off. The road led by a never-to-be-forgotten drop, to a river broad as the Orange at Norval's Pont, rustling between mud hills. An old Scotchman, in the very likeness of Charon, with big hip boots, controlled a pontoon, which sagged back and forth by current on a wire rope. The reckless motors bumped on to this ferry through a foot of water, and Charon, who never relaxed, bore us statelily across the dark, broad river to the further bank, where we all turned to look at the lucky little town, and discuss its possibilities.

'I think you can see it best from here,' said one.

'No, from here,' said another, and their voices softened on the very name of it.

Then for an hour we raced over true prairie, great yellow-green plains crossed by old buffalo trails, which do not improve motor springs, till a single chimney broke the horizon like a mast at sea; and thereby were more light-hearted men and women, a shed and a tent or two for workmen, the ribs and frames of the brick-making mechanism, a fifteen-foot square shaft sunk, sixty foot down to the clay, and, stark and black, the

pipe of a natural-gas well. The rest was Prairie—the mere curve of the earth—with little gray birds calling.

I thought it could not have been simpler, more audacious or more impressive, till I saw some women in pretty frocks go up and peer at the hissing gas-valves.

'We fancied that it might amuse you,' said all those merry people, and between laughter and digressions they talked over projects for building, first their own, and next other cities, in brick of all sorts; giving figures of output and expenses of plant that made one gasp. To the eye the affair was no more than a novel or delicious picnic. What it actually meant was a committee to change the material of civilization for a hundred miles around. I felt as though I were assisting at the planning of Nineveh; and whatever of good comes to the little town that was born lucky I shall always claim a share.

But there is no space to tell how we fed, with a prairie appetite, in the men's quarters, on a meal prepared by an artist; how we raced home at speeds no child could ever hear of, and no grown-up should attempt; how the motors squattered at the ford, and took pot-shots at the pontoon till even Charon smiled; how great horses hauled the motors up the gravelly bank into the town; how there we met people in their Sunday best, walking and driving, and pulled ourselves together, and looked virtuous; and how the merry company suddenly and quietly evanished because they thought that their guests might be tired. I can give you no notion of the pure, irresponsible frolic of it—of the almost affectionate kindness, the gray and inventive hospitality that so delicately controlled the whole

affair—any more than I can describe a certain quiet half-hour in the dusk just before we left, when the company gathered to say good-bye, while young couples walked in the street, and the glare of the never-extinguished natural-gas lamps coloured the leaves of the trees a stage green.

It was a woman, speaking out of the shadow, who said, what we all felt, 'You see, we just love our town.'

'So do we,' I said, and it slid behind us.

MOUNTAINS AND THE PACIFIC

THE prairie proper ends at Calgary, among the cattle-ranches, mills, breweries, and three-million-acre irrigation works. The river that floats timber to the town from the mountains does not slide nor rustle like prairie rivers, but brawls across bars of blue pebbles, and a greenish tinge in its water hints of the snows.

What I saw of Calgary was crowded into one lively half-hour (motors were invented to run about new cities). What I heard I picked up, oddly enough, weeks later, from a young Dane in the North Sea. He was qualmish, but his saga of triumph upheld him.

'Three years ago I come to Canada by steerage—third class. *And* I have the language to learn. Look at me! I have now my own dairy business in Calgary, and—look at me!—my own half section, that is, three hundred and twenty acres. All my land which is mine! And now I come home, first class, for Christmas here in Denmark, and I shall take out back with me, some friends of mine which are farmers, to farm on those irrigated lands near by Calgary. Oh, I tell you there is nothing wrong with Canada for a man which works.'

'And will your friends go?' I inquired.

'You bet they will. It is all arranged already. I bet they get ready to go now already; and in three

years they will come back for Christmas here in Denmark, first class like me.'

'Then you think Calgary is going ahead?'

'You bet! We are only at the beginning of things. Look at me! Chickens? I raise chickens also in Calgary,' etc., etc.

After all this pageant of unrelieved material prosperity, it was a rest to get to the stillness of the big foothills, though they, too, had been inspanned for the work of civilization. The timber off their sides was ducking and pitch-poling down their swift streams, to be sawn into house-stuff for all the world. The woodwork of a purely English villa may come from as many Imperial sources as its owner's income.

The train crept, whistling to keep its heart up, through the winding gateways of the hills, till it presented itself, very humbly, before the true mountains, the not so Little Brothers to the Himalayas. Mountains of the pine-cloaked, snow-capped breed are unchristian things.

Men mine into the flanks of some of them, and trust to modern science to pull them through. Not long ago, a mountain kneeled on a little mining village as an angry elephant kneels; but it did not get up again, and the half of that camp was no more seen on earth. The other half still stands—uninhabited. The 'heathen in his blindness' would have made arrangements with the Genius of the Place before he ever drove a pick there. As a learned scholar of a little-known university once observed to an engineer officer on the Himalaya-Tibet Road—'You white men gain nothing by not noticing what you cannot see. You fall off the road, or the road falls on you, and you die, and you think it all

an accident. How much wiser it was when we were allowed to sacrifice a man officially, sir, before making bridges or other public works. Then the local gods were officially recognized, sir, and did not give any more trouble, and the local workmen, sir, were much pleased with these precautions.'

There are many local gods on the road through the Rockies: old bold mountains that have parted with every shred of verdure and stand wrapped in sheets of wrinkled silver rock, over which the sight travels slowly as in delirium; mad, horned mountains, wreathed with dancing mists; low-browed and bent-shouldered faquirs of the wayside, sitting in meditation beneath a burden of glacier-ice that thickens every year; and mountains of fair aspect on one side, but on the other seamed with hollow sunless clefts, where last year's snow is blackened with this year's dirt and smoke of forest-fires. The drip from it seeps away through slopes of unstable gravel and dirt, till, at the appointed season, the whole half-mile of undermined talus slips and roars into the horrified valley.

The railway winds in and out among them with little inexplicable deviations and side-twists, much as a buck walks through a forest-glade, sidling and crossing uneasily in what appears to be a plain path. Only when the track has rounded another shoulder or two, a backward and upward glance at some menacing slope, shows why the train did not take the easier-looking road on the other side of the gorge.

From time to time the mountains lean apart, and nurse between them some golden valley of slow streams, fat pastures, and park-like uplands, with a little town and cow bells tinkling among berry bushes; and children

who have never seen the sun rise or set, shouting at the trains; and real gardens round the houses.

At Calgary it was a frost, and the dahlias were dead. A day later nasturtiums bloomed untouched beside the station platforms, and the air was heavy and liquid with the breath of the Pacific. One felt the spirit of the land change with the changing outline of the hills till, on the lower levels by the Fraser, it seemed that even the Sussex Downs must be nearer at heart to the Prairie than British Columbia. The Prairie people notice the difference, and the Hill people, unwisely, I think, insist on it. Perhaps the magic may lie in the scent of strange evergreens and mosses not known outside the ranges: or it may strike from wall to wall of timeless rifts and gorges, but it seemed to me to draw out of the great sea that washes further Asia—the Asia of allied mountains, mines, and forests.

We rested one day high up in the Rockies, to visit a lake carved out of pure jade, whose property is to colour every reflection on its bosom to its own tint. A belt of brown dead timber on a gravel scar, showed, upside down, like sombre cypresses rising from green turf and the reflected snows were pale green. In summer many tourists go there, but we saw nothing except the wonder-working lake lying mute in its circle of forest, where red and orange lichens grew among gray and blue moss, and we heard nothing except the noise of its outfall hurrying through a jam of bone-white logs. The thing might have belonged to Tibet or some unexplored valley behind Kinchinjunga. It had no concern with the West.

As we drove along the narrow hill road a piebald pack-pony with a china-blue eye came round a bend.

followed by two women, black-haired, bare-headed, wearing beadwork squaw-jackets, and riding straddle. A string of pack-ponies trotted through the pines behind them.

'Indians on the move?' said I. 'How characteristic!'

As the women jolted by, one of them very slightly turned her eyes, and they were, past any doubt, the comprehending equal eyes of the civilized white women which moved in that berry-brown face.

'Yes,' said our driver, when the cavalcade had navigated the next curve, 'that'll be Mrs. So-and-So and Miss So-and-So. They mostly camp hereabout for three months every year. I reckon they're coming in to the railroad before the snow falls.'

'And whereabout do they go?' I asked.

'Oh, all about anywheres. If you mean where they come from just now—that's the trail yonder.'

He pointed to a hair-crack across the face of a mountain, and I took his word for it that it was a safe pony-trail. The same evening, at an hotel of all the luxuries, a slight woman in a very pretty evening frock was turning over photographs, and the eyes beneath the strictly arranged hair were the eyes of the woman in the beadwork jacket who had quirted the piebald pack-pony past our buggy.

Praised be Allah for the diversity of His creatures! But do you know any other country where two women could go out for a three-months' trek and shoot in perfect comfort and safety?

These mountains are only ten days from London, and people more and more use them for pleasure-grounds. Other and most unthought-of persons buy little fruit-

farms in British Columbia as an excuse for a yearly visit to the beautiful land, and they tempt yet more people from England. This is apart from the regular tide of emigration, and serves to make the land known. If you asked a State-owned railway to gamble on the chance of drawing tourists, the Commissioner of Railways would prove to you that the experiment could never succeed, and that it was wrong to risk the taxpayers' money in erecting first-class hotels. Yet South Africa could, even now, be made a tourists' place—if only the railroads and steamship lines had faith.

On thinking things over I suspect I was not intended to appreciate the merits of British Columbia too highly. Maybe I misjudged; maybe she was purposely misrepresented; but I seemed to hear more about 'problems' and 'crisis' and 'situation' in her borders than anywhere else. So far as eye or ear could gather, the one urgent problem was to find enough men and women to do the work in hand.

Lumber, coal, minerals, fisheries, fit soil for fruit, dairy, and poultry farms are all there in a superb climate. The natural beauty of earth and sky match these lavish gifts; to which are added thousands of miles of safe and sheltered waterways for coastal trade; deep harbours that need no dredge; the ground-works of immense and ice-free ports—all the title-deeds to half the trade of Asia. For the people's pleasure and good disport salmon, trout, quail, and pheasant play in front of and through the suburbs of her capitals. A little axe-work and road-metalling gives a city one of the loveliest water-girt parks that we have outside the tropics. Another town is presented with a hundred islands, knolls, wooded coves, stretches of beach,

and dingles, laid down as expressly for camp-life, picnics, and boating parties, beneath skies never too hot and rarely too cold. If they care to lift up their eyes from their almost subtropical gardens they can behold snowy peaks across blue bays, which must be good for the soul. Though they face a sea out of which any portent may arise, they are not forced to protect or even to police its waters. They are as ignorant of drouth, murrain, pestilence locusts, and blight, as they are of the true meaning of want and fear.

Such a land is good for an energetic man. It is also not so bad for the loafer. I was, as I have told you, instructed on its drawbacks. I was to understand that there was no certainty in any employment; and that a man who earned immense wages for six months of the year would have to be kept by the community if he fell out of work for the other six. I was not to be deceived by golden pictures set before me by interested parties (that is to say, by almost every one I met), and I was to give due weight to the difficulties and discouragements that beset the intending immigrant. Were I an intending immigrant I would risk a good deal of discomfort to get on to the land in British Columbia; and were I rich, with no attachments outside England, I would swiftly buy me a farm or a house in that country for the mere joy of it.

I forgot those doleful and unhumorous conspirators among people who fervently believed in the place; but afterwards the memory left a bad taste in my mouth. Cities, like women, cannot be too careful what sort of men they allow to talk about them.

Time had changed Vancouver literally out of all knowledge. From the station to the suburbs, and

back to the wharves, every step was strange, and where I remembered open spaces and still untouched timber, the tramcars were fleeting people out to a lacrosse game. Vancouver is an aged city, for only a few days previous to my arrival the Vancouver Baby —*i.e.*, the first child born in Vancouver—had been married.

A steamer—once familiar in Table Bay—had landed a few hundred Sikhs and Punjabi jats—to each man his bundle—and the little groups walked uneasy alone, keeping, for many of them had been soldiers, to the military step. Yes, they said they had come to this country to get work. News had reached their villages that work at great wages was to be had in this country. Their brethren who had gone before had sent them the news. Yes, and sometimes the money for the passage out. The money would be paid back from the so-great wages to come. With interest? Assuredly with interest. Did men lend money for nothing in *any* country? They were waiting for their brethren to come and show them where to eat, and later, how to work. Meanwhile this was a new country. How could they say anything about it? No, it was not like Gurgaon or Shahpur or Jullundur. The sickness (plague) had come to all these places. It had come into the Punjab by every road, and many—many—many had died. The crops, too, had failed in some districts. Hearing the news about these so-great wages they had taken ship for the belly's sake—for the money's sake—for the children's sake.

'Would they go back again?'

They grinned as they nudged each other. The Sahib had not quite understood. They had come over

for the sake of the money—the rupees, no, the dollars. The Punjab was their home where their villages lay, where their people were waiting. Without doubt—without doubt—they would go back. Then came the brethren already working in the mills—cosmopolitans dressed in ready-made clothes, and smoking cigarettes.

'This way, O you people,' they cried. The bundles were reshouldered and the turbaned knots melted away. The last words I caught were true Sikh talk: 'But what about the money, O my brother?'

Some Punjabis have found out that money can be too dearly bought.

There was a Sikh in a sawmill, had been driver in a mountain battery at home. Himself he was from Amritsar. (Oh, pleasant as cold water in a thirsty land is the sound of a familiar name in a far country!)

'But you had your pension. Why did you come here?'

'Heaven-born, because my sense was little. And there was also the Sickness at Amritsar.'

(The historian a hundred years hence will be able to write a book on economic changes brought about by pestilence. There is a very interesting study somewhere of the social and commercial effects of the Black Death in England.)

In a wharf, waiting for a steamer, some thirty Sikhs, many of them wearing their old uniforms (which should not be allowed), were talking at the tops of their voices, so that the shed rang like an Indian railway station. A suggestion that if they spoke lower life would be easier was instantly adopted. Then a senior officer with a British India medal asked hopefully: 'Has the Sahib any orders where we are to go?'

Alas he had none—nothing but goodwill and greetings for the sons of the Khalsa, and they tramped off in fours.

It is said that when the little riot broke out in Vancouver these 'heathen' were invited by other Asiatics to join in defending themselves against the white man. They refused on the ground that they were subjects of the King. I wonder what tales they sent back to their villages, and where, and how fully, every detail of the affair was talked over. White men forget that no part of the Empire can live or die to itself.

Here is a rather comic illustration of this on the material side. The wonderful waters between Vancouver and Victoria are full of whales, leaping and rejoicing in the strong blue all about the steamer. There is, therefore, a whalery on an island near by, and I had the luck to travel with one of the shareholders.

'Whales are beautiful beasts,' he said affectionately. 'We've a contract with a Scotch firm for every barrel of oil we can deliver for years ahead. It's reckoned the best for harness-dressing.'

He went on to tell me how a swift ship goes hunting whales with a bomb-gun and explodes shells into their insides so that they perish at once.

'All the old harpoon and boat business would take till the cows come home. We kill 'em right off.'

'And how d'you strip 'em?'

It seemed that the expeditious ship carried also a large air-pump, and pumped up the carcass to float roundly till she could attend to it. At the end of her day's kill she would return, towing sometimes as many as four inflated whales to the whalery, which is a factory full of modern appliances. The whales are hauled up

inclined planes like logs to a sawmill, and as much of them as will not make oil for the Scotch leather-dresser, or cannot be dried for the Japanese market, is converted into potent manure.

'No manure can touch ours,' said the shareholder. 'It's so rich in bone, d'you see. The only thing that has beat us up to date is their hides; but we've fixed up a patent process now for turning 'em into floorcloth. Yes, they're beautiful beasts. That fellow,' he pointed to a black hump in a wreath of spray, 'would cut up a miracle.'

'If you go on like this you won't have any whales left,' I said.

'That is so. But the concern pays 30 per cent, and—a few years back, no one believed in it.'

I forgave him everything for the last sentence.

A CONCLUSION

CANADA possesses two pillars of Strength and Beauty in Quebec and Victoria. The former ranks by herself among those Mother-cities of whom none can say 'This reminds me.' To realize Victoria you must take all that the eye admires most in Bournemouth, Torquay, the Isle of Wight, the Happy Valley at Hongkong, the Doon, Sorrento, and Camps Bay; add reminiscences of the Thousand Islands, and arrange the whole round the Bay of Naples, with some Himalayas for the background.

Real estate agents recommend it as a little piece of England—the island on which it stands is about the size of Great Britain—but no England is set in any such seas or so fully charged with the mystery of the larger ocean beyond. The high, still twilights along the beaches are out of the old East just under the curve of the world, and even in October the sun rises warm from the first. Earth, sky, and water wait outside every man's door to drag him out to play if he looks up from his work; and, though some other cities in the Dominion do not quite understand this immoral mood of Nature, men who have made their money in them go off to Victoria, and with the zeal of converts preach and preserve its beauties.

We went to look at a marine junk-store which had once been Esquimalt, a station of the British Navy. It

was reached through winding roads, lovelier than English lanes, along watersides and parkways any one of which would have made the fortune of a town.

'Most cities,' a man said, suddenly, 'lay out their roads at right angles. We do in the business quarters. What d'you think?'

'I fancy some of those big cities will have to spend millions on curved roads some day for the sake of a change,' I said. 'You've got what no money can buy.'

'That's what the men tell us who come to live in Victoria. And they've had experience.'

It is pleasant to think of the Western millionaire, hot from some gridiron of rectangular civilization, confirming good Victorians in the policy of changing vistas and restful curves.

There is a view, when the morning mists peel off the harbour where the steamers tie up, of the Houses of Parliament on one hand, and a huge hotel on the other, which as an example of cunningly fitted-in water-fronts and façades is worth a very long journey. The hotel was just being finished. The ladies' drawing-room, perhaps a hundred feet by forty, carried an arched and superbly enriched plaster ceiling of knops and arabesques and interlacings, which somehow seemed familiar.

'We saw a photo of it in *Country Life*,' the contractor explained. 'It seemed just what the room needed, so one of our plasterers, a Frenchman—that's him—took and copied it. It comes in all right, doesn't it?'

About the time the noble original was put up in England Drake might have been sailing somewhere off

this very coast. So, you see, Victoria lawfully holds the copyright.

I tried honestly to render something of the colour, the gaiety, and the graciousness of the town and the island, but only found myself piling up unbelievable adjectives, and so let it go with a hundred other wonders and repented that I had wasted my time and yours on the anxious-eyed gentlemen who talked of 'drawbacks.' A verse cut out of a newspaper seems to sum up their attitude:

> As the land of Little Leisure
> Is the place where things are done,
> So the Land of Scanty Pleasure
> Is the place for lots of fun.
> In the Land of Plenty Trouble
> People laugh and people should,
> But there's some one always kicking
> In the Land of Heap Too Good!

At every step of my journey people assured me that I had seen nothing of Canada. Silent mining men from the North; fruit-farmers from the Okanagan Valley; foremen of railway gangs, not so long from English public schools; the oldest inhabitant of the town of Villeneuve, aged twenty-eight; certain English who lived on the prairie and contrived to get fun and good fellowship as well as money; the single-minded wheat-growers and cattle-men; election agents; police troopers expansive in the dusk of wayside halts; officials dependent on the popular will, who talked as delicately as they walked; and queer souls who did not speak English, and said so loudly in the dining-car—each, in his or her own way, gave me to understand this. My excursion

bore the same relation to their country as a 'bus-ride down the Strand bears to London, so I knew how they felt.

The excuse is that our own flesh and blood are more interesting than anybody else, and I held by birth the same right in them and their lives as they held in any other part of the Empire. Because they had become a people within the Empire that right was admitted and no word spoken, which would not have been the case a few years ago. One may mistake many signs on the road, but there is no mistaking the spirit of sane and realized nationality, which fills the land from end to end precisely as the joyous hum of a big dynamo well settled to its load makes a background to all the other shop noises. For many reasons that Spirit came late, but since it has come after the day of little things, doubts, and open or veiled contempts, there is less danger that it will go astray among the boundless wealth and luxury that await it. The people, the schools, the churches, the Press in its degree, and, above all, the women, understand without manifestoes that their land must now as always abide under the Law in deed and in word and in thought. This is their castemark, the ark of their covenant, their reason for being what they are. In the big cities, with their village-like lists of police court offences; in the wide-open little Western towns where the present is as free as the lives and the future as safe as the property of their inhabitants; in the coast cities galled and humiliated at their one night's riot ('It's not our habit, Sir! It's not our habit!'); up among the mountains where the officers of the law track and carefully bring into justice the astounded malefactor; and behind the orderly prairies to the

barren grounds, as far as a single white man can walk, the relentless spirit of the breed follows up, and oversees, and controls. It does not much express itself in words, but sometimes, in intimate discussion, one is privileged to catch a glimpse of the inner fires. They burn hotly.

'*We* do not mean to be de-civilized,' said the first man with whom I talked about it.

That was the answer throughout—the keynote and the explanation.

Otherwise, the Canadians are as human as the rest of us to evade or deny a plain issue. The duty of developing their country is always present, but when it comes to taking thought, better thought, for her defence, they refuge behind loose words and childish anticipations of miracles—quite in the best Imperial manner. All admit that Canada is wealthy; few that she is weak; still fewer that, unsupported, she would very soon cease to exist as a nation. The anxious inquirer is told that she does her duty towards England by developing her resources; that wages are so high a paid army is out of the question; that she is really maturing splendid defence schemes, but must not be hurried or dictated to; that a little wise diplomacy is all that will ever be needed in this so civilized era; that when the evil day comes something will happen (it certainly will), the whole concluding, very often, with a fervent essay on the immorality of war, about as much to the point as carrying a dove through the streets to allay a pestilence.

The question before Canada is not what she thinks or pays, but what an enemy may think it necessary to make her pay. If she continues wealthy and remains

weak she will surely be attacked under one pretext or another. Then she will go under, and her spirit will return to the dust with her flag as it slides down the halliards.

'That is absurd,' is always the quick answer. 'In her own interests England could never permit it. What you speak of presupposes the fall of England.'

Not necessarily. Nothing worse than a stumble by the way; but when England stumbles the Empire shakes. Canada's weakness is lack of men. England's weakness is an excess of voters who propose to live at the expense of the State. These loudly resent that any money should be diverted from themselves; and since money is spent on fleets and armies to protect the Empire while it is consolidating, they argue that if the Empire ceased to exist armaments would cease, too, and the money so saved could be spent on their proper comforts. They pride themselves on being an avowed and organized enemy of the Empire which, as others see it, waits only to give them health, prosperity, and power beyond anything their votes could win them in England. But their leaders need their votes in England, as they need their outcries and discomforts to help them in their municipal and Parliamentary careers. No engineer lowers steam in his own boilers.

So they are told little except evil of the great heritage outside, and are kept compounded in cities under promise of free rations and amusements. If the Empire were threatened they would not, in their own interests, urge England to spend men and money on it. Consequently it might be well if the nations within the Empire were strong enough to endure a little battering unaided at the first outset—till such time,

that is, as England were permitted to move to their help.

For this end an influx of good men is needed more urgently every year during which peace holds—men loyal, clean, and experienced in citizenship, with women not ignorant of sacrifice.

Here the gentlemen who propose to be kept by their neighbours are our helpful allies. They have succeeded in making uneasy the class immediately above them, which is the English working class as yet undebauched by the temptation of State-aided idleness or State-guaranteed irresponsibility. England has millions of such silent careful folk accustomed, even yet, to provide for their own offspring, to bring them up in a resolute fear of God, and to desire no more than the reward of their own labours. A few years ago this class would not have cared to shift; now they feel the general disquiet. They live close to it. Tea-and-sugar borrowing friends have told them jocularly, or with threats, of a good time coming when things will go hard with the uncheerful giver. The prospect appeals neither to their reason nor to their Savings Bank books. They hear—they do not need to read—the speeches delivered in their streets on a Sunday morning. It is one of their preoccupations to send their children to Sunday School by roundabout roads, lest they should pick up abominable blasphemies. When the tills of the little shops are raided, or when the family ne'er-do-well levies on his women with more than usual brutality, they know, because they suffer, what principles are being put into practice. If these people could quietly be shown a quiet way out of it all, very many of them would call in their savings (they are richer than they look), and slip

quietly away. In the English country, as well as in the towns, there is a feeling—not yet panic, but the dull edge of it—that the future will be none too rosy for such as are working, or are in the habit of working. This is all to our advantage.

Canada can best serve her own interests and those of the Empire by systematically exploiting this new recruiting-ground. Now that South Africa, with the exception of Rhodesia, has been paralyzed, and Australia has not yet learned the things which belong to her peace, Canada has the chance of the century to attract good men and capital into the Dominion. But the men are much more important than the money. They may not at first be as clever with the hoe as the Bessarabian or the Bokhariot, or whatever the fashionable breed is, but they have qualities of pluck, good humour, and a certain well-wearing virtue which are not altogether bad; they will not hold aloof from the life of the land, nor pray in unknown tongues to Byzantine saints; while the very tenacity and caution which made them cleave to England this long, help them to root deeply elsewhere. They are more likely to bring their women than other classes, and those women will make sacred and individual homes. A little-regarded Crown Colony has a proverb that no district can be called settled till there are pots of musk in the house-windows—sure sign that an English family has come to stay. It is not certain how much of the present steamer-dumped foreign population has any such idea. We have seen a financial panic in one country send whole army corps of aliens kiting back to the lands whose allegiance they forswore. What would they or their likes do in time of real stress, since no instinct in their bodies or their

souls would call them to stand by till the storm were over?

Surely the conclusion of the whole matter throughout the whole Empire must be men and women of our own stock, habits, language, and hopes brought in by every possible means under a well-settled policy? Time will not be allowed us to multiply to unquestionable peace, but by drawing upon England we can swiftly transfuse what we need of her strength into her veins, and by that operation bleed her into health and sanity.

Meantime, the only serious enemy to the Empire, within or without, is that very Democracy which depends on the Empire for its proper comforts, and in whose behalf these things are urged.

EGYPT OF THE MAGICIANS

1914

Sea Travel.
A Return to the East.
A Serpent of old Nile.
Up the River.
Dead Kings.
The Face of the Desert.
The Riddle of Empire.

And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments.—EXODUS vii. 22.

I

SEA TRAVEL

I HAD left Europe for no reason except to discover the sun, and there were rumours that he was to be found in Egypt.

But I had not realized what more I should find there.

A P. & O. boat carried us out of Marseilles. A serang of lascars, with whistle, chain, shawl, and fluttering blue clothes, was at work on the baggage-hatch. Somebody bungled at the winch. The serang called him a name unlovely in itself but awakening delightful memories in the hearer.

'O Serang, is that man a fool?'

'Very foolish, sahib. He comes from Surat. He only comes for his food's sake.'

The serang grinned; the Surtee man grinned; the winch began again, and the voices that called: 'Lower away! Stop her!' were as familiar as the friendly whiff from the lascars' galley or the slap of bare feet along the deck. But for the passage of a few impertinent years, I should have gone without hesitation to share their rice. Serangs used to be very kind to little white children below the age of caste. Most familiar of all was the ship itself. It had slipped my memory, nor was there anything in the rates charged to remind me that single-screws still lingered in the gilt-edged passenger trade.

Some North Atlantic passengers accustomed to real ships made the discovery, and were as pleased about it as American tourists at Stratford-on-Avon.

'Oh, come and see!' they cried. 'She has *one* screw—only one screw! Hear her thump! And *have* you seen their old barn of a saloon? *And* the officers' library? It's open for two half-hours a day week-days and one on Sundays. You pay a dollar and a quarter deposit on each book. We wouldn't have missed this trip for anything. It's like sailing with Columbus.'

They wandered about—voluble, amazed, and happy for they were getting off at Port Said.

I explored, too. From the rough-ironed table linen, the thick tooth-glasses for the drinks, the slummocky set-out of victuals at meals, to the unaccommodating regulations in the curtainless cabin, where they had not yet arrived at bunk-edge trays for morning tea, time and progress had stood still with the P. & O. To be just, there were electric fan-fittings in the cabins, but the fans were charged extra; and there was a rumour, unverified, that one could eat on deck or in one's cabin without a medical certificate from the doctor. All the rest was under the old motto: '*Quis separabit*'—'This is quite separate from other lines.'

'After all,' said an Anglo-Indian, whom I was telling about civilized ocean travel, 'they don't want you Egyptian trippers. They're sure of *us* because——' and he gave me many strong reasons connected with leave, finance, the absence of competition, and the ownership of the Bombay fore-shore.

'But it's absurd,' I insisted. 'The whole concern is out of date. There's a notice on my deck forbidding smoking and the use of naked lights, and there's a lascar

messing about the hold-hatch outside my cabin with a candle in a lantern.'

Meantime, our one-screw tub thumped gingerly towards Port Said, because we had no mails aboard, and the Mediterranean, exhausted after severe February hysterics, lay out like oil.

I had some talk with a Scotch quartermaster who complained that lascars are not what they used to be, owing to their habit (but it has existed since the beginning) of signing on as a clan or family—all sorts together.

The serang said that, for *his* part, he had noticed no difference in twenty years. 'Men are always of many kinds, sahib. And that is because God makes men this and that. Not all one pattern—not by any means all one pattern.' He told me, too, that wages were rising, but the price of ghee, rice, and curry-stuffs was up, too, which was bad for wives and families at Porbandar. 'And that also is thus, and no talk makes it otherwise.' After Suez, he would have blossomed into thin clothes and a long talk, but the bitter spring chill nipped him, as the thought of partings just accomplished and work just ahead chilled the Anglo-Indian contingent. Little by little one came at the outlines of the old stories—a sick wife left behind here, a boy there, a daughter at school, a very small daughter trusted to friends or hirelings, certain separation for so many years and no great hope or delight in the future. It was not a nice India that the tales hinted at. Here is one that explains a great deal:

There was a Pathan, a Mohammedan, in a Hindu village, employed by the village money-lender as a debt-collector, which is not a popular trade. He lived alone

among Hindus, and—so ran the charge in the lower court—he wilfully broke the caste of a Hindu villager by forcing on him forbidden Mussulman food, and when that pious villager would have taken him before the headman to make reparation, the godless one drew his Afghan knife and killed the head man, besides wounding a few others. The evidence ran without flaw, as smoothly as well-arranged cases should, and the Pathan was condemned to death for wilful murder. He appealed and, by some arrangement or other, got leave to state his case personally to the Court of Revision. Said, I believe, that he did not much trust lawyers, but that if the sahibs would give him a hearing, as man to man, he might have a run for his money.

Out of the jail, then, he came, and, Pathanlike, not content with his own good facts, must needs begin by some fairy-tale that he was a secret agent of the government sent down to spy on that village. Then he warmed to it. Yes, he *was* that money-lender's agent—a persuader of the reluctant, if you like—working for a Hindu employer. Naturally, many men owed him grudges. A lot of the evidence against him was quite true, but the prosecution had twisted it abominably. About that knife, for instance. True, he had a knife in his hand exactly as they had alleged. But why? Because with that very knife he was cutting up and distributing a roast sheep which he had given as a feast to the villagers. At that feast, he sitting in amity with all his world, the village rose up at the word of command, laid hands on him, and dragged him off to the head man's house. How could he have broken *any* man's caste when they were all eating his sheep? And in the courtyard of the head man's house they sur-

rounded him with heavy sticks and worked themselves into anger against him, each man exciting his neighbour. He was a Pathan. He knew what that sort of talk meant. A man cannot collect debts without making enemies. So he warned them. Again and again he warned them, saying: 'Leave me alone. Do not lay hands on me.' But the trouble grew worse, and he saw it was intended that he should be clubbed to death like a jackal in a drain. Then he said: 'If blows are struck, I strike, and *I* strike to kill, because I am a Pathan.' But the blows were struck, heavy ones. Therefore, with the very Afghan knife that had cut up the mutton, he struck the head man. 'Had you meant to kill the head man?' 'Assuredly! I am a Pathan. When I strike, I strike to kill. I had warned them again and again. I think I got him in the liver. He died. And that is all there is to it, sahibs. It was my life or theirs. They would have taken mine over my freely given meats. *Now*, what 'll you do with me?'

In the long run, he got several years for culpable homicide.

'But,' said I, when the tale had been told, 'whatever made the lower court accept all that village evidence? It was too good on the face of it.'

'The lower court said it could not believe it possible that so many respectable native gentlemen could have banded themselves together to tell a lie.'

'Oh! Had the lower court been long in the country?'

'It was a native judge,' was the reply.

If you think this over in all its bearings, you will see that the lower court was absolutely sincere. Was not the lower court itself a product of Western civiliza-

tion, and, as such, bound to play up—to pretend to think along Western lines—translating each grade of Indian village society into its English equivalent, and ruling as an English judge would have ruled? Pathans and, incidentally, English officials must look after themselves.

There is a fell disease of this century called 'snobbery of the soul.' Its germ has been virulently developed in modern cultures from the uncomplex bacillus isolated sixty years ago by the late William Makepeace Thackeray. Precisely as Major Ponto, with his plated dishes and stable-boy masquerading as footman, lied to himself and his guests so—but the 'Book of Snobs' can only be brought up to date by him who wrote it.

Then, a man struck in from the Sudan—far and far to the south—with a story of a discomposed judge and a much-too-collected prisoner.

To the great bazaars of Omdurman, where all things are sold, came a young man from the uttermost deserts of somewhere or other and heard a gramophone. Life was of no value to him till he had bought the creature. He took it back to his village, and at twilight set it going among his ravished friends. His father, sheik of the village, came also, listened to the loud shoutings without breath, the strong music lacking musicians, and said, justly enough: 'This thing is a devil. You must not bring devils into my village. Lock it up.'

They waited until he had gone away and then began another tune. A second time the sheik came, repeated the command, and added that if the singing box was heard again, he would slay the buyer. But their curiosity and joy defied even this, and for the third time (late at night) they slipped in pin and record and

let the djinn rave. So the sheik, with his rifle, shot his son as he had promised, and the English judge before whom he eventually came had all the trouble in the world to save that earnest gray head from the gallows. Thus:

'Now, old man, you must say guilty or not guilty.'

'But I shot him. That is why I am here. I——'

'Hush! It is a form of words which the law asks. (*Sotto voce.* Write down that the old idiot doesn't understand.) Be still now.'

'But I shot him. What else could I have done? He bought a devil in a box, and——'

'Quiet! That comes later. Leave talking.'

'But I am sheik of the village. One must not bring devils into a village. I *said* I would shoot him.'

'This matter is in the hands of the law. I judge.'

'What need? I shot him. Suppose that *your* son had brought a devil in a box to *your* village——'

They explained to him, at last, that under British rule fathers must hand over devil-dealing children to be shot by the white men (the first step, you see, on the downward path of State aid), and that he must go to prison for several months for interfering with a government shoot.

We are a great race. There was a pious young judge in Nigeria once, who kept a condemned prisoner waiting very many minutes while he hunted through the Hausa dictionary, word by word, for, 'May—God—have—mercy—on—your—soul.'

And I heard another tale—about the Suez Canal this time—a hint of what may happen some day at Panama. There was a tramp steamer, loaded with high explosives, on her way to the East, and at the far end of the canal

one of the sailors very naturally upset a lamp in the foc's'le. After a heated interval the crew took to the desert alongside, while the captain and the mate opened all cocks and sank her, not in the fairway but up against a bank, just leaving room for a steamer to squeeze past. Then the canal authorities wired to her charterers to know exactly what there might be in her; and it is said that the reply kept them awake of nights, for it was their business to blow her up.

Meantime, traffic had to go through, and a P. & O. steamer came along. There was the canal; there was the sunken wreck, marked by one elderly Arab in a little boat with a red flag, and there was about five foot clearance on each side for the P. & O. She went through a-tiptoe, because even fifty tons of dynamite will jar a boat perceptibly, and the tramp held more—very much more, not to mention detonators. By some absurd chance, almost the only passenger who knew about the thing at the time was an old lady rather proud of the secret.

'Ah,' she said, in the middle of the agonized glide, 'you may depend upon it that if everybody knew what *I* know, they'd all be on the other side of the ship.'

Later on, the authorities blew up the tramp with infinite precautions from some two miles off, for which reason she neither destroyed the Suez Canal nor dislocated the Sweet Water Canal alongside, but merely dug out a hole a hundred feet or a hundred yards deep, and so vanished from Lloyds' register.

But no stories could divert one long from the peculiarities of that amazing line which exists strictly for itself. There was a bathroom (occupied) at the windy

end of an open alleyway. In due time the bather came out.

Said the steward, as he swabbed out the tub for his successor: 'That was the chief engineer. 'E's been some time. Must 'ave 'ad a mucky job below, this mornin'.'

I have a great admiration for chief engineers. They are men in authority, needing all the comforts and aids that can possibly be given them—such as bathrooms of their own close to their own cabins, where they can clean off at leisure.

It is not fair to mix them up with the ruck of passengers, nor is it done on real ships. Nor, when a passenger wants a bath in the evening, do the stewards of real ships roll their eyes like vergers in a cathedral and say, 'We'll see if it can be managed.' They double down the alleyway and shout, 'Matcham' or 'Ponting' or 'Guttman,' and in fifteen seconds one of those swift three has the taps going and the towels out. Real ships are not annexes of Westminster Abbey or Borstal Reformatory. They supply decent accommodation in return for good money, and I imagine that their directors instruct their staffs to look pleased while at work.

Some generations back there must have been an idea that the P. & O. was vastly superior to all lines afloat—a sort of semipontifical show not to be criticized. How much of the notion was due to its own excellence and how much to its passenger-traffic monopoly does not matter. To-day, it neither feeds nor tends its passengers, nor keeps its ships well enough to put on any airs at all.

For which reason, human nature being what it is, it

surrounds itself with an ungracious atmosphere of absurd ritual to cover grudged and inadequate performance.

What it really needs is to be dropped into a March North Atlantic, without any lascars, and made to swim for its life between a C.P.R. boat and a North German Lloyd—till it learns to smile.

II

A RETURN TO THE EAST

THE East is a much larger slice of the world than Europeans care to admit. Some say it begins at St. Gothard, where the smells of two continents meet and fight all through that terrible restaurant-car dinner in the tunnel. Others have found it at Venice on warm April mornings. But the East is wherever one sees the lateen sail—that shark's fin of a rig which for hundreds of years has dogged all white bathers round the Mediterranean. There is still a suggestion of menace, a hint of piracy, in the blood whenever the lateen goes by, fishing or fruiting or coasting.

'This is *not* my ancestral trade,' she whispers to the accomplice sea. 'If everybody had their rights I should be doing something quite different; for my father, he was the Junk, and my mother, she was the Dhow, and between the two of 'em they made Asia.' Then she tacks, disorderly but deadly quick, and shuffles past the unimaginative steam-packet with her hat over one eye and a knife, as it were, up her baggy sleeves.

Even the stone-boats at Port Said, busied on jetty extensions, show their untamed descent beneath their loaded clumsiness. They are all children of the camel-nosed dhow, who is the mother of mischief, but it was

very good to meet them again in raw sunshine, unchanged in any rope and patch.

Old Port Said had disappeared beneath acres of new buildings where one could walk at leisure without being turned back by soldiers.

Two or three landmarks remained; two or three were reported as still in existence, and one Face showed itself after many years—ravaged but respectable—rigidly respectable.

'Yes,' said the Face, 'I have been here all the time. But I have made money, and when I die I am going home to be buried.'

'Why not go home before you are buried, O Face?'

'Because I have lived here *so* long. Home is only good to be buried in.'

'And what do you do, nowadays?'

'Nothing now. I live on my *rentes*—my income.'

Think of it! To live icily in a perpetual cinematograph show of excited, uneasy travellers; to watch huge steamers sliding in and out all day and all night like railway trucks, unknowing and unsought by a single soul aboard; to talk five or six tongues indifferently, but to have no country—no interest in any earth except one reservation in a Continental cemetery.

It was a cold evening after heavy rain and the half-flooded streets reeked. But we undefeated tourists ran about in droves and saw all that could be seen before train-time. We missed, most of us, the Canal Company's garden, which happens to mark a certain dreadful and exact division between East and West.

Up to that point—it is a fringe of palms, stiff against the sky—the impetus of home memories and the echo of home interests carry the young man along very

comfortably on his first journey. But at Suez one must face things. People, generally the most sympathetic, leave the boat there; the older men who are going on have discovered each other and begun to talk shop; no newspapers come aboard, only clipped Reuter telegrams; the world seems cruelly large and self-absorbed. One goes for a walk and finds this little bit of kept ground, with comfortable garden-gated houses on either side of the path. Then one begins to wonder, in the twilight, for choice, when one will see those palms again from the other side. Then the black hour of homesickness, vain regrets, foolish promises, and weak despair shuts down with the smell of strange earth and the cadence of strange tongues.

Cross-roads and halting-places in the desert are always favoured by djinns and afrits. The young man will find them waiting for him in the Canal Company's garden at Port Said.

On the other hand, if he is fortunate enough to have won the East by inheritance, as there are families who served her for five or six generations, he will meet no ghouls in that garden, but a free and a friendly and an ample welcome from good spirits of the East that awaits him. The voices of the gardeners and the watchmen will be as the greetings of his father's servants in his father's house; the evening smells and the sight of the hibiscus and poinsettia will unlock his tongue in words and sentences that he thought he had clean forgotten, and he will go back to the ship (I have seen) as a prince entering on his kingdom.

There was a man in our company—a young Englishman—who had just been granted his heart's desire in the shape of some raw district south of everything

southerly in the Sudan, where, on two-thirds of a Member of Parliament's wage, under conditions of life that would horrify a self-respecting operative, he will see perhaps some dozen white men in a year, and will certainly pick up two sorts of fever. He had been moved to work very hard for this billet by the representations of a friend in the same service, who said that it was a 'rather decent sort of service,' and he was all of a heat to reach Khartum, report for duty, and fall to. If he is lucky, he may get a district where the people are so virtuous that they do not know how to wear any clothes at all, and so ignorant that they have never yet come across strong drink.

The train that took us to Cairo was own sister in looks and fittings to any South African train—for which I loved her—but she was a trial to some citizens of the United States, who, being used to the Pullman, did not understand the side-corridored, solid-compartment idea. The trouble with a standardized democracy seems to be that, once they break loose from their standards, they have no props. People are *not* left behind and luggage is rarely mislaid on the railroads of the older world. There is an ordained ritual for the handling of all things, to which if a man will only conform and keep quiet, he and his will be attended to with the rest. The people that I watched would not believe this. They charged about futilely and wasted themselves in trying to get ahead of their neighbours.

Here is a fragment from the restaurant-car:

'Look at here! Me and some friends of mine are going to dine at this table. We don't want to be separated and——'

'You 'ave your number for the service, sar?'

'Number? What number? We want to dine *here*, I tell you.'

'You shall get your number, sar, for the first service?'

'How's that? Where in thunder do we *get* the numbers, anyway?'

'I will give you the number, sar, at the time—for places at the first service.'

'Yes, but we want to dine together here—right *now*.'

'The service is not yet ready, sar.'

And so on—and so on; with marchings and countermarchings, and every word nervously italicized. In the end they dined precisely where there was room for them in that new world which they had strayed into.

On one side our windows looked out on darkness of the waste; on the other at the black canal, all spaced with monstrous headlights of the night-running steamers. Then came towns, lighted with electricity, governed by mixed commissions, and dealing in cotton. Such a town, for instance, as Zagazig, last seen by a very small boy who was lifted out of a railway-carriage and set down beneath a whitewashed wall under naked stars in an illimitable emptiness because, they told him, the train was on fire. Childlike, this did not worry him. What stuck in his sleepy mind was the absurd name of the place and his father's prophecy that when he grew up he would 'come that way in a big steamer.'

So all his life, the word 'Zagazig' carried memories of a brick shed, the flicker of an oil-lamp's floating wick, a sky full of eyes, and an engine coughing in a desert at the world's end; which memories returned in a restaurant-car jolting through what seemed to be miles of

brilliantly lighted streets and factories. No one at the table had even turned his head for the battlefields of Kassassin and Tel-el-Kebir. After all, why should they? That work is done, and children are getting ready to be born who will say: '*I* can remember Gondokoro (or El-Obeid or some undreamed-of Clapham Junction, Abyssinia-way) before a single factory was statred, before the overhead traffic began. Yes, when there was a fever—actually fever—in the city itself!'

The gap is no greater than that between to-day's and t'other day's Zagazig—between the horsed vans of the Overland Route in Lieutenant Waghorn's time and the shining motor that flashed us to our Cairo hotel through what looked like the suburbs of Marseilles or Rome.

Always keep a new city till morning. 'In the daytime,' as it is written in the Perspicuous Book[1]: 'Thou hast long occupation.' Our window gave on to the river, but before one moved towards it one heard the thrilling squeal of the kites—those same thievish companions of the road who, at that hour, were watching every Englishman's breakfast in every compound and camp from Cairo to Calcutta.

Voices rose from below—unintelligible words in maddeningly familiar accents. A black boy in one blue garment climbed, using his toes as fingers, the tipped mainyard of a Nile boat and framed himself in the window. Then, because he felt happy, he sang, all among the wheeling kites. And beneath our balcony rolled very Nile Himself, golden in sunshine, wrinkled under strong breezes, with a crowd of creaking cargo-boats waiting for a bridge to be opened.

[1]The Koran.

On the cut-stone quay above, a line of cab drivers—a *ticca-gharri* stand, nothing less—lolled and chaffed and tinkered with their harnesses in every beautiful attitude of the ungirt East. All the ground about was spotted with chewed sugar-cane—first sign of the hot weather all the world over.

Troops with startlingly pink faces (one would not have noticed this yesterday) rolled over the girder bridge between churning motors and bubbling camels, and the whole long-coated loose-sleeved Moslem world was awake and about its business, as befits sensible people who pray at dawn.

I made haste to cross the bridge and to hear the palms in the wind on the far side. They sang as nobly as though they had been true coconuts, and the thrust of the north wind behind them was almost as open-handed as the thrust of the Trades. Then came a funeral—the sheeted corpse in the shallow cot, the brisk-pacing bearers (if he was good, the sooner he is buried the sooner in heaven; if bad, bury him swiftly for the sake of the household—either way, as the Prophet says, do not let the mourners go too long weeping and hungry)—the women behind, tossing their arms and lamenting, and men and boys chanting low and high.

They might have come forth from the Taksali Gate in the city of Lahore on just such a cold weather morning as this, on their way to the Mohammedan burial-grounds by the river. And the veiled countrywomen, shuffling side by side, elbow pressed to hip, and eloquent right hand pivoting round, palm uppermost, to give value to each shrill phrase, might have been the wives of so many Punjabi cultivators but that they wore another type of bangle and slipper. A knotty-kneed

youth sitting high on a donkey, both amuleted against the evil eye, chewed three purplish feet of sugar-cane, which made one envious as well as voluptuously homesick, though the sugar-cane of Egypt is not to be compared with that of Bombay.

Hans Breitmann writes somewhere:

Oh, if you live in Leyden town
You ll meet, if troot be told,
Der forms of all der freunds dot tied
When du werst six years old.

And they were all there under the chanting palms—saices, orderlies, pedlars, water-carriers, street-cleaners, chicken-sellers and the slate-coloured buffalo with the china-blue eyes being talked to by a little girl with the big stick. Behind the hedges of well-kept gardens squatted the brown gardener, making trenches indifferently with a hoe or a toe, and under the municipal lamp-post lounged the bronze policeman—a touch of Arab about mouth and lean nostril—quite unconcerned with a ferocious row between two donkey-men. They were fighting across the body of a Nubian who had chosen to sleep in that place. Presently, one of them stepped back on the sleeper's stomach. The Nubian grunted, elbowed himself up, rolled his eyes, and pronounced a few utterly dispassionate words. The warriors stopped, settled their headgear, and went away as quickly as the Nubian went to sleep again. This was life, the real, unpolluted stuff—worth a desert-full of mummies. And right through the middle of it—hooting and kicking up the Nile—passed a Cook's steamer all ready to take tourists to Assuan. From the Nubian's point of view she, and not himself, was the won-

der—as great as the Swiss-controlled, Swiss-staffed hotel behind her, whose lift, maybe, the Nubian helped to run. Marids and afrits, guardians of hidden gold, who choke or crush the rash seeker; encounters with the long-buried dead in a Cairo back alley; undreamed of promotions, and suddenly lit loves are the stuff of any respectable person's daily life; but the white man from across the water, arriving in hundreds with his unveiled women folk, who builds himself flying-rooms and talks along wires, who flees up and down the river, mad to sit up on camels and asses, constrained to throw down silver from both hands, at once a child and a warlock—this thing must come to the Nubian sheer out of the *Thousand and One Nights*. At any rate, the Nubian was perfectly sane. Having eaten, he slept in God's own sunlight, and I left him, to visit the fortunate and guarded and desirable city of Cairo, to whose people, male and female, Allah has given subtlety in abundance. Their jesters are known to have surpassed in refinement the jesters of Damascus, as did their twelve police captains the hardiest and most corrupt of Bagdad in the tolerant days of Harun-al-Raschid; while their old women, not to mention their young wives, could deceive the Father of Lies himself. Delhi is a great place—most bazaar storytellers in India make their villain hail from there; but when the agony and intrigue are piled highest and the tale halts till the very last breathless sprinkle of cowries has ceased to fall on his mat, why then, with wagging head and hooked forefinger, the storyteller goes on:

'*But* there was a man from Cairo, an Egyptian of the Egyptians, who'—and all the crowd knows that a bit of real metropolitan devilry is coming.

III

A SERPENT OF OLD NILE

MODERN Cairo is an unkempt place. The streets are dirty and ill constructed, the pavements unswept and often broken, the tramways thrown, rather than laid, down, the gutters neglected. One expects better than this in a city where the tourist spends so much every season. Granted that the tourist is a dog, he comes at least with a bone in his mouth, and a bone that many people pick. He should have a cleaner kennel. The official answer is that the tourist-traffic is a flea-bite compared with the cotton industry. Even so, land in Cairo city must be too valuable to be used for cotton growing. It might just as well be paved or swept. There is some sort of authority supposed to be in charge of municipal matters, but its work is crippled by what is called 'The Capitulations.' It was told to me that every one in Cairo except the English, who appear to be the mean whites of these parts, has the privilege of appealing to his counsel on every conceivable subject from the disposal of a garbage-can to that of a corpse. As almost every one with claims to respectability, and certainly every one without any, keeps a consul, it follows that there is one consul per superficial meter, arshin, or cubit of Ezekiel within the city. And since every consul is

zealous for the honour of his country and not at all above annoying the English on general principles, municipal progress is slow.

Cairo strikes one as unventilated and unsterilized, even when the sun and wind are scouring it together. The tourist talks a good deal, as you may see here, but the permanent European resident does not open his mouth more than is necessary—sound travels so far across flat water. Besides, the whole position of things, politically and administratively, is essentially false.

Here is a country which is not a country but a longish strip of market-garden, nominally in charge of a government which is not a government but the disconnected satrapy of a half-dead empire, controlled pecksniffingly by a Power which is not a Power but an Agency, which Agency has been tied up by years, custom, and blackmail in all sorts of intimate relations with six or seven European powers, all with rights and perquisites, none of whose subjects seem directly amenable to any power which at first, second, or third hand is supposed to be responsible. That is the barest outline. To fill in the details (if any living man knows them) would be as easy as to explain baseball to an Englishman or the Eton Wall game to a citizen of the United States. But it is a fascinating play. There are Frenchmen in it, whose logical mind it offends, and they revenge themselves by printing the finance-reports and the catalogue of the Bulak Museum in pure French. There are Germans in it, whose demands must be carefully weighed—not that they can by any means be satisfied, but they serve to block other people's. There are Russians in it, who do not very much matter at present but will be heard from later. There are Italians and

Greeks in it (both rather pleased with themselves just now), full of the higher finance and the finer emotions. There are Egyptian pashas in it, who come back from Paris at intervals and ask plaintively to whom they are supposed to belong. There is His Highness the Khedive, in it, and *he* must be considered not a little, and there are women in it, up to their eyes. And there are great English cotton and sugar interests, and angry English importers clamouring to know why they cannot do business on rational lines or get into the Sudan,which they hold is ripe for development if the administration there would only see reason. Among these conflicting interests and amusements sits and perspires the English official, whose job is irrigating or draining or reclaiming land on behalf of a trifle of ten million people, and he finds himself tripped up by skeins of intrigue and bafflement which may ramify through half a dozen harems and four consulates. All this makes for suavity, toleration, and the blessed habit of not being surprised at anything whatever.

Or, so it seemed to me, watching a big dance at one of the hotels. Every European race and breed and half of the United States were represented, but I fancied I could make out three distinct groupings. The tourists with the steamer-trunk creases still across their dear, excited backs; the military and the officials sure of their partners beforehand, and saying clearly what ought to be said, and a third contingent, lower-voiced, softer-footed, and keener-eyed than the other two, at ease, as gipsies are on their own ground flinging half-words in local *argot* over shoulders at their friends, understanding on the nod and moved by springs common to their clan only. For example, a woman was

talking flawless English to her partner, an English officer. Just before the next dance began, another woman beckoned to her, Eastern fashion, all four fingers flicking downward. The first woman crossed to a potted palm; the second moved towards it, also, till the two drew up, not looking at each other, the plant between them. Then she who had beckoned spoke in a strange tongue *at* the palm. The first woman, still looking away, answered in the same fashion with a rush of words that rattled like buckshot through the stiff fronds. Her tone had nothing to do with that in which she greeted her new partner, who came up as the music began. The one was a delicious drawl; the other had been the guttural rasp and click of the kitchen and the bazaar. So she moved off, and, in a little, the second woman disappeared into the crowd. Most likely it was no more than some question of the programme or dress, but the prompt, feline stealth and coolness of it, the lightning-quick return to and from world-apart civilizations stuck in my memory.

So did the bloodless face of a very old Turk, fresh from some horror of assassination in Constantinople in which he, too, had been nearly pistolled, but, they said, he had argued quietly over the body of a late colleague, as one to whom death was of no moment, until the hysterical Young Turks were abashed and let him get away—to the lights and music of this elegantly appointed hotel.

These modern 'Arabian Nights' are too hectic for quiet folk. I declined upon a more rational Cairo—the Arab city where everything is as it was when Maruf the Cobbler fled from Fatima-el-Orra and met the djinn in the Adelia Musjid. The craftsmen and merchants

sat on their shopboards, a rich mystery of darkness behind them, and the narrow gullies were polished to shoulder-height by the mere flux of people. Shod white men, unless they are agriculturists, touch lightly, with their hands at most, in passing. Easterns lean and loll and squat and sidle against things as they daunder along. When the feet are bare, the whole body thinks. Moreover, it is unseemly to buy or to do aught and be done with it. Only people with tight-fitting clothes that need no attention have time for that. So we of the loose skirt and flowing trousers and slack slipper make full and ample salutations to our friends, and redouble them towards our ill-wishers, and if it be a question of purchase, the stuff must be fingered and appraised with a proverb or so, and if it be a fool tourist who thinks that he cannot be cheated, O true believers! draw near and witness how we shall loot him.

But I bought nothing. The city thrust more treasure upon me than I could carry away. It came out of dark alleyways on tawny camels loaded with pots; on pattering asses half buried under nets of cut clover; in the exquisitely modelled hands of little children scurrying home from the cookshop with the evening meal, chin pressed against the platter's edge and eyes round with responsibility above the pile; in the broken lights from jutting rooms overhead, where the women lie, chin between palms, looking out of windows not a foot from the floor; in every glimpse into every courtyard, where the men smoke by the tank; in the heaps of rubbish and rotten bricks that flanked newly painted houses, waiting to be built, some day, into houses once more; in the slap and slide of the heelless red-and-yellow slippers all around, and, above all, in the mixed delicious smells of

frying butter, Mohammedan bread, kalabs, leather, cooking-smoke, asafetida, peppers, and turmeric. Devils cannot abide the smell of burning turmeric, but the right-minded man loves it. It stands for evening that brings all home, the evening meal, the dipping of friendly hands in the dish, the one face, the dropped veil, and the big, guttering pipe afterward.

Praised be Allah for the diversity of His creatures and for the five advantages of travel and for the glories of the cities of the earth! Harun-al-Raschid, in roaring Bagdad of old, never delighted himself to the limits of such a delight as was mine, that afternoon. It is true that the call to prayer, the cadence of some of the street-cries, and the cut of some of the garments differed a little from what I had been brought up to; but for the rest, the shadow on the dial had turned back twenty degrees for me, and I found myself saying, as perhaps the dead say when they have recovered their wits, 'This is my real world again.'

Some men are Mohammedan by birth, some by training, and some by fate, but I have never met an Englishman yet who hated Islam and its people as I have met Englishmen who hated some other faiths. *Musalmani awadani*, as the saying goes—where there are Mohammedans, there is a comprehensible civilization.

Then we came upon a deserted mosque of pitted brick colonnades round a vast courtyard open to the pale sky. It was utterly empty except for its own proper spirit, and that caught one by the throat as one entered. Christian churches may compromise with images and side-chapels, where the unworthy or abashed can traffic with accessible saints. Islam has but one

pulpit and one stark affirmation—living or dying, one only—and where men have repeated that in red-hot belief through centuries, the air still shakes to it.

Some say now that Islam is dying and that nobody cares; others that, if she withers in Europe and Asia, she will renew herself in Africa and will return—terrible—after certain years, at the head of all the nine sons of Ham; others dream that the English understand Islam as no one else does, and, in years to be, Islam will admit this and the world will be changed. If you go to the mosque Al Azhar—the thousand-year-old University of Cairo—you will be able to decide for yourself. There is nothing to see except many courts, cool in hot weather, surrounded by cliff-like brick walls. Men come and go through dark doorways, giving on to yet darker cloisters, as freely as though the place was a bazaar. There are no aggressive educational appliances. The students sit on the ground, and their teachers instruct them, mostly by word of mouth, in grammar, syntax, logic; *al-hisab*, which is arithmetic; *al-lab'r w'al muqabalah*, which is algebra; *at-tafsir*, commentaries on the Koran; and, last and most troublesome, *al-ahadis*, traditions, and yet more commentaries on the law of Islam, which leads back, like everything, to the Koran once again. (For it is written: 'Truly the Quran is none other than a revelation.') It is a very comprehensive curriculum. No man can master it entirely, but any can stay there as long as he pleases. The university provides commons—twenty-five thousand loaves a day, I believe, and there is always a place to lie down in for such as do not desire a shut room and a bed. Nothing could be more simple or, given certain conditions, more effective. Close upon six hundred

professors who represent officially or unofficially every school of thought, teach ten or twelve thousand students, who draw from every Mohammedan community, west and east between Manila and Morocco, north and south between Kamchatka and the Malay mosque at Cape Town. These drift off to become teachers of little schools, preachers at mosques, students of the Law known to millions (but rarely to Europeans), dreamers, devotees, or miracle-workers in all the ends of the earth. The man who interested me most was a red-bearded, sunk-eyed mullah from the Indian frontier, not likely to be last at any distribution of food, who stood up like a lean wolf-hound among collies in a little assembly at a doorway.

And there was another mosque, sumptuously carpeted and lighted (which the Prophet did not approve of), where men prayed in the dull mutter that, at times, mounts and increases under the domes like the boom of drums or the surge of a hot hive before the swarm flings out. And round the corner of it, one almost ran into Our inconspicuous and wholly detached Private of Infantry, his tunic open, his cigarette alight, leaning against some railings and considering the city below. Men in forts and citadels and garrisons all the world over go up at twilight as automatically as sheep at sundown, to have a last look round. They say little and return as silently across the crunching gravel, detested by bare feet, to their whitewashed rooms and regulated lives. One of the men told me he thought well of Cairo. It was interesting. 'Take it from me,' he said, 'there's a lot in seeing places, because you can remember 'em afterward.'

He was very right. The purple and lemon-coloured

hazes of dusk and reflected day spread over the throbbing, twinkling streets, masked the great outline of the citadel and the desert hills, and conspired to confuse and suggest and evoke memories till Cairo the Sorceress cast her proper shape and danced before me in the heart-breaking likeness of every city I had known and loved, a little farther up the road.

It was a cruel double-magic. For in the very hour that my homesick soul had surrendered itself to the dream of the shadow that had turned back on the dial, I realized all the desolate days and homesickness of all the men penned in far-off places among strange sounds and smells.

IV

UP THE RIVER

ONCE upon a time there was a murderer who got off with a life-sentence. What impressed him most, when he had time to think, was the frank boredom of all who took part in the ritual.

'It was just like going to a doctor or a dentist,' he explained. '*You* come to 'em very full of your affairs, and then you discover that it's only part of their daily work to *them*. I expect,' he added, 'I should have found it the same if—er—I'd gone on to the finish.'

He would have. Break into any new Hell or Heaven and you will be met at its well-worn threshold by the bored experts in attendance.

For three weeks we sat on copiously chaired and carpeted decks, carefully isolated from everything that had anything to do with Egypt, under chaperonage of a properly orientalized dragoman. Twice or thrice daily, our steamer drew up at a mud-bank covered with donkeys. Saddles were hauled out of a hatch in our bows; the donkeys were dressed, dealt round like cards; we rode off through crops or desert, as the case might be, were introduced in ringing tones to a temple, and were then duly returned to our bridge and our Baedekers. For sheer comfort, not to say padded sloth, the life was unequalled, and since the bulk of our passengers were

citizens of the United States—Egypt in winter ought to be admitted into the Union as a temporary territory—there was no lack of interest. They were overwhelmingly women, with here and there a placid nose-led husband or father, visibly suffering from congestion of information about his native city. I had the joy of seeing two such men meet. They turned their backs resolutely on the River, bit and lit cigars, and for one hour and a quarter ceased not to emit statistics of the industries, commerce, manufacture, transport, and journalism of their towns—Los Angeles, let us say, and Rochester, N. Y. It sounded like war between two cash-registers.

One forgot, of course, that all the dreary figures were alive to them, and as Los Angeles spoke Rochester visualized. Next day I met an Englishman from the Soudan end of things, very full of a little-known railway which had been laid down in what looked like raw desert, and therefore had turned out to be full of paying freight. He was in the full-tide of it when Los Angeles ranged alongside and cast anchor, fascinated by the mere roll of numbers.

'How's that?' he cut in sharply at a pause.

He was told how, and went on to drain my friend dry concerning that railroad, out of sheer fraternal interest, as he explained, in 'any darn thing that's being made anywheres.'

'So you see,' my friend went on, 'we shall be bringing Abyssinian cattle into Cairo.'

'On the hoof?' One quick glance at the desert ranges.

'No, no! By rail and River. And after *that* we're going to grow cotton between the Blue and the White Nile and knock spots out of the States.'

'Ha-ow's that?'

'This way.' The speaker spread his first and second fingers fanwise under the big, interested beak. 'That's the Blue Nile. And that's the White. There's a difference of so many feet between 'em, an' in that fork here, 'tween my fingers, we shall——'

'*I* see. Irrigate on the strength of the little difference in the levels. How many acres?'

Again Los Angeles was told. He expanded like a frog in a shower. 'An' I thought,' he murmured, 'Egypt was all mummies and the Bible! *I* used to know something about cotton. Now we'll talk.'

All that day the two paced the deck with the absorbed insolence of lovers; and, lover-like, each would steal away and tell me what a splendid soul was his companion.

That was one type; but there were others—professional men who did not make or sell things—and these the hand of an all-exacting Democracy seemed to have run into one mould. They were not reticent, but no matter whence they hailed, their talk was as standardized as the fittings of a Pullman.

I hinted something of this to a woman aboard who was learned in the sermons of either language.

'I think,' she began, 'that the staleness you complain of——'

'I never said "staleness",' I protested.

'But you thought it. The staleness you noticed is due to our men being so largely educated by old women —old maids. Practically till he goes to College, and not always then, a boy can't get away from them.'

'Then what happens?'

'The natural result. A man's instinct is to teach a

boy to think for himself. If a woman can't make a boy think *as* she thinks, she sits down and cries. A man hasn't any standards. He makes 'em. A woman's the most standardized being in the world. She has to be. *Now* d'you see?'

'Not yet.'

'Well, our trouble in America is that we're being school-marmed to death. You can see it in any paper you pick up. What were those men talking about just now?'

'Food adulteration, police-reform, and beautifying waste-lots in towns,' I replied promptly.

She threw up her hands. 'I knew it!' she cried. 'Our great National Policy of co-educational housekeeping! Ham-frills and pillow-shams. Did you ever know a man get a woman's respect by parading around creation with a dish-clout pinned to his coat-tails?'

'But if his woman ord— told him to do it?' I suggested.

'Then she'd despise him the more for doing it. *You* needn't laugh. You're coming to the same sort of thing in England.'

I returned to the little gathering. A woman was talking to them as one accustomed to talk from birth. They listened with the rigid attention of men early trained to listen to, but not to talk with, women. She was, to put it mildly, the mother of all she-bores, but when she moved on, no man ventured to say as much.

'That's what I mean by being school-marmed to death,' said my acquaintance wickedly. 'Why, she bored 'em stiff, but they are so well brought up, they didn't even know they were bored. Some day the American Man is going to revolt.'

'And what'll the American Woman do?'

'She'll sit and cry—and it'll do her good.'

Later on, I met a woman from a certain Western State seeing God's great, happy, inattentive world for the first time, and rather distressed that it was not like hers. She had always understood that the English were brutal to their wives—the papers of her State said so. (If you only knew the papers of her State!) But she had not noticed any scandalous treatment so far, and Englishwomen, whom she admitted she would never understand, seemed to enjoy a certain specious liberty and equality; while Englishmen were distinctly kind to girls in difficulties over their baggage and tickets on strange railways. Quite a nice people, she concluded, but without much sense of humour. One day, she showed me what looked like a fashion-paper print of a dress-stuff—a pretty oval medallion of stars on a striped grenadine background that somehow seemed familiar.

'How nice! What is it?' I asked.

'Our National Flag,' she replied.

'Indeed. But it doesn't look quite——'

'No. This is a new design for arranging the stars so that they shall be easier to count and more decorative in effect. We're going to take a vote on it in our State where *we* have the franchise. I shall cast my vote when I get home.'

'Really! And how will you vote?'

'I'm just thinking that out.' She spread the picture on her knee and considered it, head to one side, as though it were indeed dress material.

All this while the land of Egypt marched solemnly beside us on either hand. The river being low, we saw

it from the boat as one long plinth, twelve to twenty feet high of brownish, purplish mud, visibly upheld every hundred yards or so by glistening copper caryatides in the shape of naked men baling water up to the crops above. Behind that bright emerald line ran the fawn- or tiger-coloured background of desert, and a pale blue sky closed all. There was Egypt even as the Pharaohs, their engineers and architects, had seen it—land to cultivate, folk and cattle for the work, and outside that work no distraction nor allurement of any kind whatever, save when the dead were taken to their place beyond the limits of cultivation. When the banks grew lower, one looked across as much as two miles of green-stuff packed like a toy Noah's-ark with people, camels, goats, oxen, buffaloes, and an occasional horse. The beasts stood as still, too, as the toys, because they were tethered or hobbled each to his own half-circle of clover, and moved forward when that was eaten. Only the very little kids were loose, and these played on the flat mud roofs like kittens.

No wonder 'every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.' The dusty, naked-footed field-tracks are cut down to the last centimetre of grudged width; the main roads are lifted high on the flanks of the canals unless the permanent-way of some light railroad can be pressed to do duty for them. The wheat, the pale ripened tufted sugar-cane, the millet, the barley, the onions, the fringed castor-oil bushes jostle each other for foothold, since the Desert will not give them room; and men chase the falling Nile inch by inch, each dawn, with new furrowed melon-beds on still dripping mud-banks.

Administratively, such a land ought to be a joy. The

people do not emigrate; all their resources are in plain sight; they are as accustomed as their cattle to being led about. All they desire, and it has been given them, is freedom from murder and mutilation, rape and robbery. The rest they can attend to in their silent palm-shade villages where the pigeons coo and the little children play in the dust.

But Western civilization is a devastating and a selfish game. Like the young woman from 'our State,' it says in effect: "I am rich. I've nothing to do. I *must* do something. I shall take up social reform.'

Just now there is a little social reform in Egypt which is rather amusing. The Egyptian cultivator borrows money; as all farmers must. This land without hedge or wild-flower is his passion by age-long inheritance and suffering, by, in and for which he lives. He borrows to develop it and to buy more at from £30 to £200 per acre, the profit on which, when all is paid, works out at between £5 to £10 per acre. Formerly, he borrowed from the local money-lenders, mostly Greeks, at 30 per cent per annum and over. This rate is not excessive, so long as public opinion allows the borrower from time to time to slay the lender; but modern administration calls that riot and murder. Some years ago, therefore, there was established a State-guaranteed Bank which lent to the cultivators at 8 per cent, and the cultivator zealously availed himself of that privilege. He did not default more than in reason, but being a farmer, he naturally did not pay up till threatened with being sold up. So he prospered and bought more land, which was his heart's desire. This year—1913—the administration issued sudden orders that no man owning less than five acres could borrow on security of his land.

The matter interested me directly, because I held five hundred pounds worth of shares in that State-guaranteed Bank, and more than half our clients were small men of less than five acres. So I made inquiries in quarters that seemed to possess information, and was told that the new law was precisely on all-fours with the Homestead Act of the United States and France, and the intentions of Divine Providence—or words to that effect.

'But,' I asked, 'won't this limitation of credit prevent the men with less than five acres from borrowing more to buy more land and getting on in the world?'

'Yes,' was the answer, 'of course it will. That's just what we want to prevent. Half these fellows ruin themselves trying to buy more land. We've got to protect them against themselves.'

That, alas! is the one enemy against which no law can protect any son of Adam; since the real reasons that make or break a man are too absurd or too obscene to be reached from outside. Then I cast about in other quarters to discover what the cultivator was going to do about it.

'Oh, him?' said one of my many informants. '*He's* all right. There are about six ways of evading the Act that I know of. The fellah probably knows another six. He has been trained to look after himself since the days of Rameses. He can forge land-transfers for one thing; borrow land enough to make his holding more than five acres for as long as it takes to register a loan; get money from his own women (yes, that's one result of modern progress in this land!) or go back to his old friend the Greek at 30 per cent.'

'Then the Greek will sell him up, and that will be against the law, won't it?' I said.

'Don't you worry about the Greek. He can get through any law ever made if there's five piastres on the other side of it.'

'Maybe; but *was* the Agricultural Bank selling the cultivators up too much?'

'Not in the least. The number of small holdings is on the increase, if anything. Most cultivators won't pay a loan until you point a judgment-summons at their head. They think that shows they're men of consequence. This swells the number of judgment-summonses issued, but it doesn't mean a land-sale for each summons. Another fact is that in real life some men don't get on as well as others. Either they don't farm well enough, or they take to hashish, or go crazy about a girl and borrow money for her, or—er—something of that kind, and they are sold up. You may have noticed that.'

'I have. And meantime, what is the fellah doing?'

'Meantime, the fellah has misread the Act—as usual. He thinks it's retrospective, and that he needn't pay past debts. They may make trouble, but I fancy your Bank will keep quiet.'

'Keep quiet! With the bottom knocked out of two-thirds of its business and—and my five hundred pounds involved!'

'Is that your trouble? I don't think your shares will rise in a hurry; but if you want some fun, go and talk to the French about it.'

This seemed as good a way as any of getting a little interest. The Frenchman that I went to spoke with a certain knowledge of finance and politics and the natural malice of a logical race against an illogical horde.

'Yes,' he said. 'The idea of limiting credit under

these circumstances is absurd. But that is not all. People are not frightened, business is not upset by one absurd idea, but by the possibilities of more.'

'Are there any more ideas, then, that are going to be tried on this country?'

'Two or three,' he replied placidly. 'They are all generous; but they are all ridiculous. Egypt is not a place where one should promulgate ridiculous ideas.'

'But my shares—my shares!' I cried. 'They have already dropped several points.'

'It is possible. They will drop more. Then they will rise.'

'Thank you. But why?'

'Because the idea is fundamentally absurd. That will never be admitted by your people, but there will be arrangements, accommodations, adjustments, till it is all the same as it used to be. It will be the concern of the Permanent Official—poor devil!—to pull it straight. It is always his concern. Meantime, prices will rise for all things.'

'Why?'

'Because the land is the chief security in Egypt. If a man cannot borrow on that security, the rates of interest will increase on whatever other security he offers. That will affect all work and wages and Government contracts.'

He put it so convincingly and with so many historical illustrations that I saw whole perspectives of the old energetic Pharaohs, masters of life and death along the River, checked in mid-career by cold-blooded accountants chanting that not even the Gods themselves can make two plus two more than four. And the vision ran down through the ages to one little earnest head on a

Cook's steamer, bent sideways over the vital problem of rearranging 'our National Flag' so that it should be 'easier to count the stars.'

For the thousandth time: Praised be Allah for the diversity of His creatures!

V

DEAD KINGS

THE Swiss are the only people who have taken the trouble to master the art of hotel-keeping. Consequently, in the things that really matter—beds, baths, and victuals—they control Egypt; and since every land always throws back to its aboriginal life (which is why the United States delight in telling aged stories), any ancient Egyptian would at once understand and join in with the life that roars through the nickel-plumbed tourist-barracks on the river, where all the world frolics in the sunshine. At first sight, the show lends itself to cheap moralizing, till one recalls that one only sees busy folk when they are idle, and rich folk when they have made their money. A citizen of the United States—his first trip abroad—pointed out a middle-aged Anglo-Saxon who was relaxing after the manner of several school-boys.

'There's a sample!' said the Son of Hustle scornfully. ''Tell me, *he* ever did anything in his life?' Unluckily he had pitched upon one who, when he is in collar, reckons thirteen and a half hours a fairish day's work.

Among this assembly were men and women burned to an even blue-black tint—civilized people with bleached hair and sparkling eyes. They explained

themselves as 'diggers'—just diggers, and opened me a new world. Granted that all Egypt is one big undertaker's emporium, what could be more fascinating than to get Government leave to rummage in a corner of it, to form a little company and spend the cold weather trying to pay dividends in the shape of amethyst necklaces, lapis lazuli scarabs, pots of pure gold, and priceless bits of statuary? Or, if one is rich, what better fun than to grub-stake an expedition on the supposed site of a dead city and see what turns up? There was a big-game hunter who had used most of the Continent, quite carried away by this sport.

'I'm going to take shares in a city next year, and watch the digging myself,' he said. 'It beats elephants to pieces. In *this* game you're digging up dead things and making them alive. Aren't you going to have a flutter?'

He showed me a seductive little prospectus. Myself, I would sooner not lay hands on a dead man's kit or equipment, especially when he has gone to his grave in the belief that the trinkets guarantee salvation. Of course, there is the other argument, put forward by sceptics, that the Egyptian was a blatant self-advertiser, and that nothing would please him more than the thought that he was being looked at and admired after all these years. Still, one might rob some shrinking soul who didn't see it in that light.

At the end of spring the diggers flock back out of the Desert and exchange chaff and news in the gorgeous verandahs. For example, A's company has made a find of priceless stuff, Heaven knows how old, and is—not too meek about it. Company B, less fortunate, hints that if only A knew to what extent their native

diggers had been stealing and disposing of the thefts, under their very archaeological noses, they would not be so happy.

'Nonsense,' says Company A. 'Our diggers are above suspicion. Besides, we watched 'em.'

'*Are* they?' is the reply.

'Well, next time you are in Berlin, go to the Museum and you'll see what the Germans have got hold of. It must have come out of your ground. The Dynasty proves it.' So A's cup is poisoned—till next year. No collector or curator of a museum should have any more scruples whatever; and I have never met one who had; though I have been informed by deeply shocked informants of four nationalities that the Germans are the most flagrant pirates of all.

The business of exploration is about as romantic as earth-work on Indian railways. There are the same narrow-gauge trams and donkeys, the same shining gangs in the borrow-pits and the same skirling dark-blue crowds of women and children with the little earth-baskets. But the hoes are not driven in, nor the clods jerked aside at random, and when the work fringes along the base of some mighty wall, men use their hands carefully. A white man—or he was white at breakfast-time—patrols through the continually renewed dust-haze. Weeks may pass without a single bead, but anything may turn up at any moment, and it is his to answer the shout of discovery.

We had the good fortune to stay awhile at the Head-quarters of the Metropolitan Museum (New York) in a valley riddled like a rabbit-warren with tombs. Their stables, store-houses, and servants' quarters are old tombs; their talk is of tombs, and their dream (the

diggers' dream always) is to discover a virgin tomb where the untouched dead lie with their jewels upon them. Four miles away are the wide-winged, rampant hotels. Here is nothing whatever but the rubbish of death that died thousands of years ago, on whose grave no green thing has ever grown. Villages, expert in two hundred generations of grave-robbing, cower among the mounds of wastage, and whoop at the daily tourist. Paths made by bare feet run from one half-tomb, half-mud-heap to the next, not much more distinct than snail smears, but they have been used since. . . .

Time is a dangerous thing to play with. That morning the concierge had toiled for us among steamer-sailings to see if we could save three days. That evening we sat with folk for whom Time had stood still since the Ptolemies. I wondered, at first, how it concerned them or any man if such and such a Pharaoh had used to his own glory the plinths and columns of such another Pharaoh before or after Melchizedek. Their whole background was too inconceivably remote for the mind to work on. But the next morning we were taken to the painted tomb of a noble—a Minister of Agriculture—who died four or five thousand years ago. He said to me, in so many words: 'Observe! I was very like your friend, the late Mr. Samuel Pepys, of your Admiralty. I took an enormous interest in life, which I most thoroughly enjoyed, on its human and on its spiritual side. I do not think you will find many departments of State better managed than mine, or a better-kept house, or a nicer set of young people. . . . My daughters! The eldest, as you can see, takes after her mother. The youngest, my favourite, is supposed to favour me. Now I will show you all the things that I did, and de-

lighted in, till it was time for me to present my accounts elsewhere.' And he showed me, detail by detail, in colour and in drawing, his cattle, his horses, his crops, his tours in the district, his accountants presenting the revenue returns, and he himself, busiest of the busy, in the good day.

But when we left that broad, gay ante-room and came to the narrower passage where once his body had lain and where all his doom was portrayed, I could not follow him so well. I did not see how he, so experienced in life, could be cowed by friezes of brute-headed apparitions or satisfied by files of repeated figures. He explained, something to this effect:

'We live on the River—a line without breadth or thickness. Behind us is the Desert, which nothing can affect; whither no man goes till he is dead. (One does not use good agricultural ground for cemeteries.) Practically, then, we only move in two dimensions—up stream or down. Take away the Desert, which we don't consider any more than a healthy man considers death, and you will see that we have no background whatever. Our world is all one straight bar of brown or green earth, and, for some months, mere sky-reflecting water that wipes out everything. You have only to look at the Colossi to realize how enormously and extravagantly man and his works must scale in such a country. Remember, too, that our crops are sure, and our life is very, very easy. Above all, we have no neighbours. That is to say, we must give out, for we cannot take in. Now, I put it to you, what is left for a priest with imagination, except to develop ritual and multiply gods on friezes? Unlimited leisure, limited space of two dimensions, divided by the hypnotizing

line of the River, and bounded by visible, unalterable death—must, *ipso facto*——'

'Even so,' I interrupted. 'I do not comprehend your gods—your direct worship of beast, for instance?'

'You prefer the indirect? The worship of Humanity with a capital H? My gods, or what I saw in them, contented me.'

'What did you see in your gods as affecting belief and conduct?'

'You know the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx?'

'No,' I murmured. 'What is it?'

'"All sensible men are of the same religion, but no sensible man ever tells,"' he replied. With that I had to be content, for the passage ended in solid rock.

There were other tombs in the valley, but the owners were dumb, except one Pharaoh, who from the highest motives had broken with the creeds and instincts of his country, and so had all but wrecked it. One of his discoveries was an artist, who saw men not on one plane but modelled full or three-quarter face, with limbs suited to their loads and postures. His vividly realized stuff leaped to the eye out of the acreage of low-relief in the old convention, and I applauded as a properly brought up tourist should.

'Mine was a fatal mistake,' Pharaoh Ahkenaton sighed in my ear. 'I mistook the conventions of life for the realities.'

'Ah, those soul-crippling conventions!' I cried.

'You mistake me,' he answered more stiffly. 'I was so sure of their reality that I thought that they were only invented to cover the raw facts of life.'

'Ah, those raw facts of life!' I cried, still louder; for it is not often that one has a chance of impressing

a Pharaoh. 'We must face them with open eyes and an open mind! Did *you*?'

'I had no opportunity of avoiding them,' he replied. 'I broke every convention in my land.'

'Oh, noble! And what happened?'

'What happens when you strip the cover off a hornet's nest? The raw fact of life is that mankind is just a little lower than the angels, and the conventions are based on that fact in order that men may become angels. But if you begin, as I did, by the convention that men are angels they will assuredly become bigger beasts than ever.'

'That,' I said firmly, 'is altogether out-of-date. You should have brought a larger mentality, a more vital uplift, and—er—all that sort of thing, to bear on—all that sort of thing, you know.'

'I did,' said Ahkenaton gloomily. 'It broke me!' And he, too, went dumb among the ruins.

There is a valley of rocks and stones in every shade of red and brown, called the Valley of the Kings, where a little oil-engine coughs behind its hand all day long, grinding electricity to light the faces of dead Pharaohs a hundred feet underground. All down the valley, during the tourist season, stand charabancs and donkeys and sand-carts, with here and there exhausted couples who have dropped out of the processions and glisten and fan themselves in some scrap of shade. Along the sides of the valley are the tombs of the kings, as it might be neatly numbered, mining adits with concrete steps leading up to them, and iron grilles that lock of nights, and doorkeepers of the Department of Antiquities demanding the proper tickets. One enters, and from deeps below deeps hears the voice of dragomans booming

through the names and titles of the illustrious and thrice-puissant dead. Rock-cut steps go down into hot, still darkness, passages twist and are led over blind pits which, men say, the wise builders childishly hoped would be taken for the real tombs by thieves to come. Up and down these alleyways clatter all the races of Europe with a solid backing of the United States. Their footsteps are suddenly blunted on the floor of a hall paved with immemorial dust that will never dance in any wind. They peer up at the blazoned ceilings, stoop down to the minutely decorated walls, crane and follow the sombre splendours of a cornice, draw in their breaths and climb up again to the fierce sunshine to redive into the next adit on their programme. What they think proper to say, they say aloud—and some of it is very interesting. What they feel you can guess from a certain haste in their movements—something between the shrinking modesty of a man under fire and the Hadn't-we-better-be-getting-on attitude of visitors to a mine. After all, it is not natural for man to go underground except for business or for the last time. He is conscious of the weight of mother-earth overhead, and when to her expectant bulk is added the whole beaked, horned, winged, and crowned hierarchy of a lost faith flaming at every turn of his eye, he naturally wishes to move away. Even the sight of a very great king indeed, sarcophagused under electric light in a hall full of most fortifying pictures, does not hold him too long.

Some men assert that the crypt of St. Peter's, with only nineteen centuries bearing down on the groining, and the tombs of early popes and kings all about, is more impressive than the Valley of the Kings because it

explains how and out of what an existing creed grew. But the Valley of the Kings explains nothing except that most terrible line in *Macbeth:*

To the last syllable of recorded time.

Earth opens her dry lips and says it.

In one of the tombs there is a little chamber whose ceiling, probably because of a fault in the rock, could not be smoothed off like the others. So the decorator, very cunningly, covered it with a closely designed cloth-pattern—just such a chintz-like piece of stuff as, in real life, one would use to underhang a rough roof with. He did it perfectly, down there in the dark, and went his way. Thousands of years later, there was born a man of my acquaintance who, for good and sufficient reason, had an almost insane horror of anything in the nature of a ceiling-cloth. He used to make excuses for not going into the dry goods shops at Christmas, when hastily enlarged annexes are hidden, roof and sides, with embroideries. Perhaps a snake or a lizard had dropped on his mother from the roof before he was born; perhaps it was the memory of some hideous fever-bout in a tent. At any rate, that man's idea of The Torment was a hot, crowded underground room, underhung with patterned cloths. Once in his life at a city in the far north, where he had to make a speech, he met that perfect combination. They led him up and down narrow, crowded, steam-heated passages, till they planted him at last in a room without visible windows (by which he knew he was underground), and directly beneath a warm-patterned ceiling-cloth—rather like a tent-lining. And there he had to say his say, while panic terror sat in his throat. The second time was in

the Valley of the Kings, where very similar passages, crowded with people, led him into a room cut of rock fathoms underground, with what looked like a sagging chintz cloth not three feet above his head.

'The man I'd like to catch,' he said when he came outside again, 'is that decorator-man. D'you suppose he meant to produce that effect?'

Every man has his private terrors, other than those of his own conscience. From what I saw in the Valley of the Kings, the Egyptians seem to have known this some time ago. They certainly have impressed it on most unexpected people. I heard two voices down a passage talking together as follows:

She. I guess we weren't ever meant to see these old tombs from inside, anyway.

He. How so?

She. For one thing, they believe so hard in being dead. Of course, their outlook on spiritual things wasn't as broad as ours.

He. Well, there's no danger of *our* being led away by it. Did you buy that alleged scarab off the dragoman this morning?

VI

THE FACE OF THE DESERT

GOING up the Nile is like running the gauntlet before Eternity. Till one has seen it, one does not realize the amazing thinness of that little damp trickle of life that steals along undefeated through the jaws of established death. A rifle-shot would cover the widest limits of cultivation, a bow-shot would reach the narrower. Once beyond them a man may carry his next drink with him till he reaches Cape Blanco on the west (where he may signal for one from a passing Union Castle boat) or the Karachi Club on the east. Say four thousand dry miles to the left hand and three thousand to the right.

The weight of the Desert is on one, every day and every hour. At morning, when the cavalcade tramps along in the rear of the tulip-like dragoman, She says: 'I am here—just beyond that ridge of pink sand that you are admiring. Come along, pretty gentleman, and I'll tell you your fortune.' But the dragoman says very clearly: 'Please, sar, do not separate yourself at *all* from the main body,' which, the Desert knows well, you had no thought of doing. At noon, when the stewards rummage out lunch-drinks from the dewy ice-chest, the Desert whines louder than the well-wheels on the bank: 'I am here, only a quarter of a mile away.

For mercy's sake, pretty gentleman, spare a mouthful of that prickly whisky-and-soda you are lifting to your lips. There's a white man a few hundred miles off, dying on my lap of thirst—thirst that you cure with a rag dipped in lukewarm water while you hold him down with the one hand, and he thinks he is cursing you aloud, but he isn't, because his tongue is outside his mouth and he can't get it back. Thank *you*, my noble captain!' For naturally one tips half the drink over the rail with the ancient prayer: 'May it reach him who needs it,' and turns one's back on the pulsing ridges and fluid horizons that are beginning their mid-day mirage-dance.

At evening the Desert obtrudes again—tricked out as a Nautch girl in veils of purple, saffron, gold-tinsel, and grass-green. She postures shamelessly before the delighted tourists with woven skeins of homeward-flying pelicans, fringes of wild duck, black spotted on crimson, and cheap jewellery of opal clouds. 'Notice Me!' She cries, like any other worthless woman. 'Admire the play of My mobile features—the revelations of My multi-coloured soul! Observe My allurements and potentialities. Thrill while I stir you!' So She floats through all Her changes and retires upstage into the arms of the dusk. But at midnight She drops all pretence and bears down in Her natural shape, which depends upon the conscience of the beholder and his distance from the next white man.

You will observe in the *Benedicite Omnia Opera* that the Desert is the sole thing not enjoined to 'bless the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever.' This is because when our illustrious father, the Lord Adam and his august consort, the Lady Eve, were expelled

from Eden, Eblis the Accursed, fearful lest mankind should return ultimately to the favour of Allah, set himself to burn and lay waste all the lands east and west of Eden.

Oddly enough, the Garden of Eden is almost the exact centre of all the world's deserts, counting from Gobi to Timbuctoo; and all that land *qua* land is 'dismissed from the mercy of God.' Those who use it do so at their own risk. Consequently the Desert produces her own type of man exactly as the sea does. I was fortunate enough to meet one sample, aged perhaps twenty-five. His work took him along the edge of the Red Sea, where men on swift camels come to smuggle hashish, and sometimes guns, from dhows that put in to any convenient beach. These smugglers must be chased on still swifter camels, and since the wells are few and known, the game is to get ahead of them and occupy their drinking-places.

But they may skip a well or so, and do several days' march in one. Then their pursuer must take e'en greater risks and make crueller marches that the Law may be upheld. The one thing in the Law's favour is that hashish smells abominably—worse than a heated camel—so, when they range alongside, no time is lost in listening to lies. It was not told to me how they navigate themselves across the broken wastes, or by what arts they keep alive in the dust-storms and heat. That was taken for granted, and the man who took it so considered himself the most commonplace of mortals. He was deeply moved by the account of a new aërial route which the French are laying out somewhere in the Sahara over a waterless stretch of four hundred miles, where if the aeroplane is disabled between stations the

pilot will most likely die and dry up beside it. To do the Desert justice, she rarely bothers to wipe out evidence of a kill. There are places in the Desert, men say, where even now you come across the dead of old battles, all as light as last year's wasps' nests, laid down in swathes or strung out in flight, with, here and there, the little sparkling lines of the emptied cartridge-cases that dropped them.

There are valleys and ravines that the craziest smugglers do not care to refuge in at certain times of the year; as there are rest-houses where one's native servants will not stay because they are challenged on their way to the kitchen by sentries of old Soudanese regiments which have long gone over to Paradise. And of voices and warnings and outcries behind rocks there is no end. These last arise from the fact that men very rarely live in a spot so utterly still that they can hear the murmuring race of the blood over their own eardrums. Neither ship, prairie, nor forest gives that silence. I went out to find it once, when our steamer tied up and the rest of them had gone to see a sight, but I never dared venture more than a mile from our funnel-smoke. At that point I came upon a hill honey-combed with graves that held a multitude of paper-white skulls, all grinning cheerfully like ambassadors of the Desert. But I did not accept their invitation. They had told me that all the little devils learn to draw in the Desert, which explains the elaborate and purposeless detail that fills it. None but devils could think of etching every rock outcrop with wind-lines, or skinning it down to its glistening nerves with sand-blasts; of arranging hills in the likeness of pyramids and sphinxes and wrecked town-suburbs; of covering the space of half an English

county with sepia studies of interlacing and recrossing ravines, dongas, and nullahs, each an exposition of much too clever perspective; and of wiping out the half-finished work with a wash of sand in three tints, only to pick it up again in silver-point on the horizon's edge. This they do in order to make lost travellers think they can recognize landmarks, and run about identifying them till the madness comes. The Desert is all devil-device—as you might say 'blasted cleverness'—crammed with futile works, always promising something fresh round the next corner, always leading out through heaped decoration and over-insistent design into equal barrenness.

There was a morning of mornings when we lay opposite the rock-hewn Temple of Abu-Simbel, where four great figures, each sixty feet high, sit with their hands on their knees waiting for Judgment Day. At their feet is a little breadth of blue-green crop; they seem to hold back all the weight of the Desert behind them, which, none the less, lips over at one side in a cataract of vividest orange sand. The tourist is recommended to see the sunrise here, either from within the temple where it falls on a certain altar erected by Rameses in his own honour, or from without where another Power takes charge.

The stars had paled when we began our watch; the river-birds were just whispering over their toilettes in the uncertain purplish light. Then the river dimmered up like pewter; the line of the ridge behind the Temple showed itself against a milkiness in the sky; one felt rather than saw that there were four figures in the pit of gloom below it. These blocked themselves out, huge enough, but without any special terror, while the

glorious ritual of the Eastern dawn went forward. Some reed of the bank revealed itself by reflection, black on silver; arched wings flapped and jarred the still water to splintered glass; the desert ridge turned to topaz, and the four figures stood clear, yet without shadowing, from their background. The stronger light flooded them red from head to foot, and they became alive—as horridly and tensely yet blindly alive as pinioned men in the death-chair before the current is switched on. One felt that if by any miracle the dawn could be delayed a second longer, they would tear themselves free, and leap forth to heaven knows what sort of vengeance. But that instant the full sun pinned them in their places—nothing more than statues slashed with light and shadow—and another day got to work.

A few yards to the left of the great images, close to the statue of an Egyptian princess, whose face was the very face of 'She,' there was a marble slab over the grave of an English officer killed in a fight against dervishes nearly a generation ago.

From Abu Simbel to Wady Halfa the river, escaped from the domination of the Pharaohs, begins to talk about dead white men. Thirty years ago, young English officers in India lied and intrigued furiously that they might be attached to expeditions whose bases were sometimes at Suakim, sometimes quite in the desert air, but all of whose deeds are now quite forgotten. Occasionally the dragoman, waving a smooth hand east or south-easterly, will speak of some fight. Then everyone murmurs: 'Oh yes. That was Gordon, of course,' or 'Was that before or after Omdurman?' But the river is much more precise. As the boat quarters the falling stream like a puzzled hound,

all the old names spurt up again under the paddle-wheels—'Hicks' army—Val Baker—El Teb—Tokar—Tamai—Taranieb—and Osman Digna!' Her head swings round for another slant: '*We cannot land English or Indian troops; if consulted, recommend abandonment of the Soudan within certain limits.*' That was my Lord Granville chirruping to the advisers of His Highness the Khedive, and the sentence comes back as crisp as when it first shocked one in '84. Next—here is a long reach between flooded palm trees—next, of course, comes Gordon—and a delightfully mad Irish war correspondent who was locked up with him in Khartoum. Gordon—eighty-four—eighty-five—the Suakim-Berber Railway really begun and quite as really abandoned. Korti—Abu Klea—the Desert Column—a steamer called the *Safieh*, not the *Condor*, which rescued two other steamers wrecked on their way back from a Khartoum in the red hands of the Mahdi of those days. Then—the smooth glide over deep water continues—another Suakim expedition with a great deal of Osman Digna and renewed attempts to build the Suakim-Berber Railway. 'Hashin,' say the paddle-wheels, slowing all of a sudden—'MacNeil's Zareba—the 15th Sikhs and another native regiment—Osman Digna in great pride and power, and Wady Halfa a frontier town. Tamai, once more; another siege of Suakim: Gemaiza; Handub; Trinkitat, and Tokar—1887.'

The river recalls the names; the mind at once brings up the face and every trick of speech of some youth met for a few hours, maybe, in a train on the way to Egypt of the old days. Both name and face had utterly vanished from one's memory till then.

It was another generation that picked up the ball ten years later and touched down in Khartoum. Several people aboard the Cook boat had been to that city. They all agreed that the hotel charges were very high, but that you could buy the most delightful curiosities in the native bazaar. But I do not like bazaars of the Egyptian kind, since a discovery I made at Assouan. There was an old man—a Mussulman—who pressed me to buy some truck or other, not with the villainous camaraderie that generations of low-caste tourists have taught the people; nor yet with the cosmopolitan lighthandedness of appeal which the town-bred Egyptian picks up much too quickly; but with a certain desperate zeal, foreign to his whole creed and nature. He fingered, he implored, he fawned with an unsteady eye, and while I wondered I saw behind him the puffy pink face of a fezzed Jew, watching him as a stoat watches a rabbit. When he moved the Jew followed and took position at a commanding angle. The old man glanced from me to him and renewed his solicitations. So one could imagine an elderly hare thumping wildly on a tambourine with the stoat behind him. They told me afterwards that Jews own most of the stalls in Assouan bazaar, the Mussulmans working for them, since tourists need Oriental colour. Never having seen or imagined a Jew coercing a Mussulman this colour was new and displeasing to me.

VII

THE RIDDLE OF EMPIRE

AT HALFA one feels the first breath of a frontier. Here the Egyptian Government retires into the background, and even the Cook steamer does not draw up in the exact centre of the postcard. At the telegraph-office, too, there are traces, diluted but quite recognizable, of military administration. Nor does the town, in any way or place whatever, smell—which is proof that it is not looked after on popular lines. There is nothing to see in it any more than there is in Hulk C. 60, late of her Majesty's troopship *Himalaya*, now a coal-hulk in the Hamoaze at Plymouth. A river-front, a narrow terraced river-walk of semi-oriental houses, barracks, a mosque, and half-a-dozen streets at right angles, the Desert racing up to the end of each, make all the town. A mile or so up stream under palm trees are bungalows of what must have been cantonments, some machinery repair-shops, and odds and ends of railway track. It is all as paltry a collection of whitewashed houses, pitiful gardens, dead walls, and trodden waste spaces as one would wish to find anywhere; and every bit of it quivers with the remembered life of armies and river-fleets, as the finger-bowl rings when the rubbing finger is lifted. The most unlikely men have done time there; stores by the

thousand ton have been rolled and pushed and hauled up the banks by tens of thousands of scattered hands; hospitals have pitched themselves there, expanded enormously, shrivelled up and drifted away with the drifting regiments; railway sidings by the mile have been laid down and ripped up again, as the need changed, and utterly wiped out by the sand.

Halfa has been the rail-head, Army Headquarters, and hub of a universe—the one place where a man could make sure of buying tobacco and sardines, or could hope for letters for himself and medical attendance for his friend. Now she is a little shrunken shell of a town without a proper hotel, where tourists hurry up from the river to buy complete sets of Soudan stamps at the Post Office.

I went for a purposeless walk from one end of the place to the other, and found a crowd of native boys playing football on what might have been a parade-ground of old days.

'And what school is that?' I asked in English of a small, eager youth.

'Madrissah,' said he most intelligently, which being translated means just 'school.'

'Yes, but *what* school?'

'Yes, Madrissah, school, sar," and he tagged after to see what else the imbecile wanted.

A line of railway track, that must have fed big workshops in its time, led me between big-roomed houses and offices labelled departmentally, with here and there a clerk at work. I was directed and re-directed by polite Egyptian officials (I wished to get at a white officer if possible, but there wasn't one about); was turned out of a garden which belonged to an Authority; hung

round the gate of a bungalow with an old-established compound and two white men sitting in chairs on a verandah; wandered down towards the river under the palm trees, where the last red light came through; lost myself among rusty boilers and balks of timber; and at last loafed back in the twilight escorted by the small boy and an entire brigade of ghosts, not one of whom I had ever met before, but all of whom I knew most intimately. They said it was the evenings that used to depress *them* most, too; so they all came back after dinner and bore me company, while I went to meet a friend arriving by the night train from Khartoum.

She was an hour late, and we spent it, the ghosts and I, in a brick-walled, tin-roofed shed, warm with the day's heat; a crowd of natives laughing and talking somewhere behind in the darkness. We knew each other so well by that time, that we had finished discussing every conceivable topic of conversation—the whereabouts of the Mahdi's head, for instance—work, reward, despair, acknowledgment, flat failure, all the real motives that had driven us to do anything, and all our other longings. So we sat still and let the stars move, as men must do when they meet this kind of train.

Presently I asked: 'What is the name of the next station out from here?'

'Station Number One,' said a ghost.

'And the next?'

'Station Number Two, and so on to Eight, I think.'

'And wasn't it worth while to name even *one* of these stations for some man, living or dead, who had something to do with making the line?'

'Well, they didn't, anyhow,' said another ghost.

'I suppose they didn't think it worth while. Why? What do *you* think?'

'I think,' I replied, 'it is the sort of snobbery that nations go to Hades for.'

Her headlight showed at last, an immense distance off; the economic electrics were turned up, the ghosts vanished, the dragomans of the various steamers flowed forward in beautiful garments to meet their passengers who had booked passages in the Cook boats, and the Khartoum train decanted a joyous collection of folk, all decorated with horns, hoofs, skins, hides, knives, and assegais, which they had been buying at Omdurman. And when the porters laid hold upon their bristling bundles, it was like MacNeill's Zareba without the camels.

Two young men in tarboushes were the only people who had no part in the riot. Said one of them to the other:

'Hullo?'

Said the other: 'Hullo!'

They grunted together for a while. Then one pleasantly:

'Oh, I'm sorry for *that!* I thought I was going to have you under me for a bit. Then you'll use the rest-house there?'

'I suppose so,' said the other. "Do you happen to know if the roof's on?'

Here a woman wailed aloud for her dervish spear which had gone adrift, and I shall never know, except from the back pages of the Soudan Almanack, what state that rest-house there is in.

The Soudan Administration, by the little I heard, is a queer service. It extends itself in silence from the

edges of Abyssinia to the swamps of the Equator at an average pressure of one white man to several thousand square miles. It legislates according to the custom of the tribe where possible, and on the common sense of the moment when there is no precedent. It is recruited almost wholly from the army, armed chiefly with binoculars, and enjoys a death-rate a little lower than its own reputation. It is said to be the only service in which a man taking leave is explicitly recommended to get out of the country and rest himself that he may return the more fit to his job. A high standard of intelligence is required, and lapses are not overlooked. For instance, one man on leave in London took the wrong train from Boulogne, and instead of going to Paris, which, of course, he had intended, found himself at a station called Kirk Kilissie or Adrianople West, where he stayed for some weeks. It was a mistake that might have happened to any one on a dark night after a stormy passage, but the authorities would not believe it, and when I left Egypt were busily engaged in boiling him in hot oil. They are grossly respectable in the Soudan now.

Long and long ago, before even the Philippines were taken, a friend of mine was reprimanded by a British Member of Parliament, first for the sin of blood-guiltiness because he was by trade a soldier, next for murder because he had fought in great battles, and lastly, and most important, because he and his fellow-braves had saddled the British taxpayer with the expense of the Soudan. My friend explained that all the Soudan had ever cost the British taxpayer was the price of about one dozen of regulation Union Jacks—one for each province. 'That,' said the M.P., triumphantly, 'is

all it will ever be worth.' He went on to justify himself, and the Soudan went on also. To-day it has taken its place as one of those accepted miracles which are worked without heat or headlines by men who do the job nearest their hand and seldom fuss about their reputations.

But less than sixteen years ago the length and breadth of it was one crazy hell of murder, torture, and lust, where every man who had a sword used it till he met a stronger and became a slave. It was—men say who remember it—a hysteria of blood and fanaticism; and precisely as an hysterical woman is called to her senses by a dash of cold water, so at the battle of Omdurman the land was reduced to sanity by applied death on such a scale as the murderers and the torturers at their most unbridled could scarcely have dreamed. In a day and a night all who had power and authority were wiped out and put under till, as the old song says, no chief remained to ask after any follower. They had all charged into Paradise. The people who were left looked for renewed massacres of the sort they had been accustomed to, and when these did not come, they said helplessly: 'We have nothing. We are nothing. Will you sell us into slavery among the Egyptians?' The men who remember the old days of the Reconstruction —which deserves an epic of its own—say that there was nothing left to build on, not even wreckage. Knowledge, decency, kinship, property, title, sense of possession had all gone. The people were told they were to sit still and obey orders; and they stared and fumbled like dazed crowds after an explosion. Bit by bit, however, they were fed and watered and marshalled into some sort of order; set to tasks they never dreamed to

see the end of; and, almost by physical force, pushed and hauled along the ways of mere life. They came to understand presently that they could reap what they had sown, and that man, even a woman, might walk for a day's journey with two goats and a native bedstead and live undespoiled. But they had to be taught kindergarten-fashion.

And little by little, as they realized that the new order was sure and that their ancient oppressors were quite dead, there returned not only cultivators, craftsmen, and artisans, but outlandish men of war, scarred with old wounds and the generous dimples that the Martini-Henry bullet used to deal—fighting men on the lookout for new employ. They would hang about, first on one leg then on the other, proud or uneasily friendly, till some white officer circulated near by. And at his fourth or fifth passing, brown and white having approved each other by eye, the talk—so men say—would run something like this:

OFFICER (*with air of sudden discovery*). Oh, you by the hut, there, what is your business?

WARRIOR (*at 'attention' complicated by attempt to salute*). I am So-and-So, son of So-and-So, from such and such a place.

OFFICER. I hear. And . . . ?

WARRIOR (*repeating salute*). And a fighting man also.

OFFICER (*impersonally to horizon*). But they *all* say that nowadays.

WARRIOR (*very loudly*). But there is a man in one of your battalions who can testify to it. He is the grandson of my father's uncle.

OFFICER (*confidentially to his boots*). Hell is *quite*

full of such grandsons of just such father's uncles; and how do I know if Private So-and-So speaks the truth about his family. (*Makes to go.*)

WARRIOR (*swiftly removing necessary garments*). Perhaps. But *these* don't lie. Look! I got this ten, twelve years ago when I was quite a lad, close to the old Border. Yes, Halfa. It was a true Snider bullet. Feel it! This little one on the leg I got at the big fight that finished it all last year. But I am not lame (*violent leg-exercise*), not in the least lame. See! I run. I jump. I kick. Praised be Allah!

OFFICER. Praised be Allah! And then?

WARRIOR (*coquettishly*). Then, I shoot. I am not a common spear-man. (*Lapse into English.*) Yeh, dam goo' shot! (*pumps lever of imaginary Martini*).

OFFICER (*unmoved*). I see. And then?

WARRIOR (*indignantly*). *I* am come here—after many days' marching. (*Change to childlike wheedle.*) Are *all* the regiments full?

At this point the relative, in uniform, generally discovered himself, and if the officer liked the cut of his jib, another 'old Mahdi's man' would be added to the machine that made itself as it rolled along. They dealt with situations in those days by the unclouded light of reason and a certain high and holy audacity.

There is a tale of two Sheikhs shortly after the Reconstruction began. One of them, Abdullah of the River, prudent and the son of a slave-woman, professed loyalty to the English very early in the day, and used that loyalty as a cloak to lift camels from another Sheikh, Farid of the Desert, still at war with the English, but a perfect gentleman, which Abdullah was not. Naturally, Farid raided back on Abdullah's kine.

Abdullah complained to the authorities, and the Border fermented. To Farid in his desert camp with a clutch of Abdullah's cattle round him, entered, alone and unarmed, the officer responsible for the peace of those parts. After compliments, for they had had dealings with each other before: 'You've been driving Abdullah's stock again,' said the Englishman.

'I should think I had!' was the hot answer. 'He lifts my camels and scuttles back into your territory, where he knows I can't follow him for the life; and when I try to get a bit of my own back, he whines to you. He's a cad—an utter cad.'

'At any rate, he is loyal. If you'd only come in and be loyal too, you'd both be on the same footing, and then if he stole from you, he'd catch it!'

'He'd never dare to steal except under your protection. Give him what he'd have got in the Mahdi's time—a first-class flogging. *You* know he deserves it!'

'I'm afraid that isn't allowed. You have to let me shift all those bullocks of his back again.'

'And if I don't?'

'Then, I shall have to ride back and collect all my men and begin war against you.'

'But what prevents my cutting your throat where you sit?'

'For one thing, you aren't Abdullah, and——'

'There! You confess he's a cad!'

'And for another, the Government would only send another officer who didn't understand your ways, and then there *would* be war, and no one would score except Abdullah. He'd steal your camels and get credit for it.'

'So he would, the scoundrel! This is a hard world

for honest men. Now, you admit Abdullah is a cad. Listen to me, and I'll tell you a few more things about him. He was, etc., etc. He is, etc., etc.'

'You're perfectly right, Sheikh, but don't you see I can't tell him what I think of him so long as he's loyal and you're out against us? Now, if *you* come in I promise you that I'll give Abdullah a telling-off—yes, in your presence—that will do you good to listen to.'

'No! I won't come in! But—I tell you what I will do. I'll accompany you to-morrow as your guest, understand, to your camp. Then you send for Abdullah, and *if* I judge that his fat face has been sufficiently blackened in my presence, I'll think about coming in later.'

So it was arranged, and they slept out the rest of the night, side by side, and in the morning they gathered up and returned all Abdullah's cattle, and in the evening, in Farid's presence, Abdullah got the tongue-lashing of his wicked old life, and Farid of the Desert laughed and came in, and they all lived happy ever afterwards.

Somewhere or other in the nearer provinces the old heady game must be going on still, but the Soudan proper has settled to civilization of the brick-bungalow and bougainvillea sort, and there is a huge technical college where the young men are trained to become fitters, surveyors, draftsmen, and telegraph employees at fabulous wages. In due time, they will forget how warily their fathers had to walk in the Mahdi's time to secure even half a bellyful. Then, as has happened elsewhere, they will honestly believe that they themselves originally created and since then have upheld the easy life into which they were bought at so heavy a price. Then the demand will go up for 'extension of

local government,' 'Soudan for the Soudanese,' and so on till the whole cycle has to be retrodden. It is a hard law but an old one—Rome died learning it, as our western civilization may die—that if you give any man anything that he has not painfully earned for himself, you infallibly make him or his descendants your devoted enemies.

THE END

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